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SOME PASSAGES IN THE LIFE OF DAVID MAXWELL

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I.

THE tea-tray was old English silver; the cups were delicate and graceful; the room was furnished with simplicity and good taste; it was the one instance where Miss Wetmore had triumphed over a self-confident mother. She sat before the fire on an afternoon in late January, and looked about her with a sense of the repose and well-being she experienced here and in no other corner of the house except her own bedroom.

It was cold outside, and the birch logs on the andirons were piled high and crackled cheerfully. They threw their light on the soft color of the smooth, unornamented walls, on which hung a few photographs of great pictures. The lamp was not yet lit, for at four o'clock the day had not faded to twilight, and the chintz covers of the chairs, the bright toned pattern of the rug, and the leaping flames on the hearth made the room cheerful.

Miss Wetmore sat with her hands crossed idly on some letters in her lap, in the quiet that excitement sometimes lends an active nature. She was handsome, in a statuesque way, with a nobly set head and beautiful shoulders; stately even when sitting alone in the trailing gray silk and lace which she wore as a tea-gown. If you had studied Mr. Wetmore, civilly getting through time at one of their long dinners, you would have traced the source of her determined lips and clear-sighted eyes that neither faltered before the truth, nor

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had the imagination to see two sides to it. Her thoughts and the fire had deepened the soft color of her cheek to a spot of red, and, as the servant announced "Mr. Maxwell," she grasped her letters with fingers that shook slightly. She did not rise, only leaned forward with a brilliant, eager glance not very commonly in her eyes.

"Am I early?" said her visitor. "I thought it so much the best chance of seeing you and not seeing other people." He drew a chair up to the fire, and held out his hands to its blaze. "It's beastly cold," he went on; "the fine bracing weather that sends most people to the South. I hope Mr. Wetmore likes the thermometer at zero."

She leaned back, looking past him at the fire, but she saw him, nevertheless.

"Papa doesn't think about the thermometer," she said slowly, "but he delivered a horrible sentence on us this morning. We are to go to Washington for six weeks, and I don't want to go at all."

Maxwell had keen instincts, trained in a hard school. He lifted his restless, light-gray eyes from the fire, and for a moment they met hers; they were soft, eager; with all her dignity her youth betrayed a secret. He dropped his glance to the fire again, and talked on to gain time for thought.

"You don't want to go? Oh, that's because you don't know Washington; the life would fascinate you—for six weeks. I can't say you will want more of it; but that will be a delightful experience. Why, Washington thinks—acts—it doesn't merely talk and make money as we do here."

He leaned back and crossed his arms, and again met her glance with his keen, elusive eyes. She had thought it amounted to a fault when she first met him, that you could not believe him frank; now she didn't care whether he was frank or not; he knew best about that and about other things.

"I don't want to be uprooted like a plant and set in another conservatory just to please papa," she protested, "and I am interested enough where I am, and—altogether I hate it!"

Maxwell was thinking hard and looking gravely at her; she was more on her guard now, and returned his look with interest only.

"It's nice of you to hate it," he said, and gave a short friendly laugh, which she had never made out the lack in; she wasn't subtle enough to know that you can laugh with your mind and not with your heart; it is a real performance, but it lacks fire. "I hate it, too," he went on, in the abrupt sentences he usually dealt in, "but I am older than you are. Hating things doesn't suggest they aren't likely to happen."

Miss Wetmore pressed the electric bell beside her.

"You paint yourself as a sort of Saint Simeon standing patiently on a column," she said,—“Tea, James,—and somehow I shouldn't think patience was your strong point.” She smiled, to soften even so gentle a criticism.

Maxwell laughed.

“It isn't. A sullen endurance is the best that I can achieve, or a mighty effort to totally abandon what I wanted.”

She arched her graceful neck. “I'm not going to learn that,” she said; “fate can deny me things, but it can't dictate my likings.”

“You ignorant young creature,” said Maxwell, softly; and, their eyes meeting, Miss Wetmore's dropped, and her color rose.

Maxwell turned to the fire and jammed his hands into his pockets. It was true, then, the thing was there and he might have it. Toughened though he was, his heart beat a quick tattoo; why not? She was handsome, lovable, and very rich. It would settle his future, the long voyage would be at an end, and his boat at anchor. But the port? A most desirable haven, but was it a fit one? An image came to him of a long stretch of green lawn running down to the water-side; a wharf, a pier, a yacht, and beside it a battered cruiser straining at her chain. There were false colors to be shown somewhere; Maxwell was only part pirate, and he didn't desire to turn that part to his wife. The silence only lasted a moment, but he had almost made up his mind.

She was busy with the tea-things when he turned to her.

“How little you know of life, don't you?” he said, slowly; “how old are you?”

She did not look up. “Twenty-two.”

“Good Lord!” He passed his hand over his smooth fair hair. “And I am close to forty! Why, I feel as though I had been dancing with you under false pretences. Did you guess in these three months what a decrepit person you were flirting with?” His smile wrinkled round his eyes, and just touched his fine, rather thin lips.

“I wasn't flirting,” said Miss Wetmore. “Do you still take two lumps?”

“No, I am moving on,” said Maxwell; “I like two and a half.”

She smiled, and there was again a quicker circulation of his blood, and another essay of his rapid mind to make a *résumé* of the field. He did not love her—no, not at all! Curiously enough, through all his constant attention to her, he had never felt a quickening of his pulse until now, and even now it arose from a perception of her feeling, not the awakening of his own. She had been one of the desirable belles of the winter; they got on, she encouraged him, and he skimmed

the social cream the situation involved; that had been all. No, not quite all: he had flirted too, and he had rated her response as part of the same pastime, but he had been wrong; he knew it now as surely as though it were written on the wall. She would take him if he offered—take him and force on her father a moderately successful stockbroker with an unknown past and no connections. Would it be square? Had he the one thing to offer in return for what she gave him that might justify him in accepting it? He took his cup, and, slipping out the extra lump she had dropped in, smiled at her over it as he leaned forward, the cup held on his knee.

"No other vandals disgrace your tea-table as I do, do they?" he said; "they all take it without sugar and most of them without cream."

"You are the only person who drinks syrup," retorted Miss Wetmore, with a charming smile; and at that moment James announced another visitor.

"I won't go," murmured Maxwell.

"Don't," said his hostess, speaking low, also; and she rose to meet the bejewelled figure that advanced upon them.

"Well, Minnie," she said, in a voice that was civil, but not cordial, "I should think you would need something more than turquoises to keep you warm. Come to the fire."

"Rather,"—a low voice came from behind Mrs. Dixon's spotted veil,—*"Mr. Maxwell, how lucky to find you! I have a message for you from Jimmy."* She took Maxwell's chair near the fire, and he drew up a low stool between her and the tea-table.

"Have you?" said Maxwell. "I saw him an hour ago, but he discoursed solely upon business."

Mrs. Dixon shook her head. "You men!" she exclaimed; "you are so materialistic,—aren't they, Jeanne? Now, we never think of business, do we?"

"There wouldn't be much point in it, if we did." Miss Wetmore held out a cup of tea to her guest. "No sugar, no cream—isn't that it?"

"You sweet girl to remember!" Mrs. Dixon put back her veil and revealed the handsome complexion and expressive brown eyes with which nature had gifted her. "I would almost forget there was such a thing as sugar, but this man comes in and demands it in his tea."

Miss Wetmore wondered how often Mr. Maxwell went to Mrs. Dixon's in the afternoon, and Maxwell felt a desire to box the neat little ears near him, with their large pearl studs.

"Mrs. Dixon is horribly mean about sugar," he remarked.

"Jimmy and I have to retire and solace ourselves with refreshments in the dining-room when the tea gets too Chinese. How about my message?"

Mrs. Dixon drew off her glove and displayed white fingers covered with rings. Jimmy's successes were as regularly recorded there as in his books. "Your message was that the ice at Hinton will bear, and we want you to come down on Saturday for Sunday; we'll open the house and have a party. Jeanne, I came to ask you."

Miss Wetmore leaned back, looking less animated than she had before.

"Thanks, we go to Washington on Friday for the rest of the winter; my skating is over."

"To Washington!" Mrs. Dixon had drunk her tea, and handed the cup to Maxwell, not forgetting a long, grateful glance as he took it, which struck Miss Wetmore as very disproportionate to his service. "Why, that's sudden, isn't it? What fun you'll have!"

There was a hearty ring in her voice that to the girl's quickened wits sounded very like relief, and Mrs. Dixon's drawing on of her glove and adjustment of her veil spoke the same language. "She lets me have my last interview undisturbed," thought Jeanne, and she bit her lip as she rose to shake hands with her guest.

"I'm hurrying on in this absurd way,"—the soft rich voice again came from a somewhat Delphic source, "because I promised Alfred Parker to go with him the first time he tried to run his machine himself, and I asked him to try twilight because if we do sit shuddering and panting for an hour in the park, we shan't be recognized by all our friends." She shook hands with Maxwell and left her fingers in his until he gently dropped them. "Don't forget Saturday; you'll come, won't you?"

"It would be delightful," Maxwell answered, rather stiffly, and he opened the door and closed it sharply behind her. Then, coming back to his stool, he sat down and, clasping his hands about his knee, stared thoughtfully at his hostess.

"How do you suppose Jimmy stands it?" he said.

She looked at him, and wondered whether the speech expressed all his relations to Mrs. Dixon.

"Stands it!" she answered; "he's in love with her."

"I suppose he is," he returned; "that's queerer still."

"Yet you go there and get your tea," she spoke with a half rallying, half serious question in her voice.

"I'm not in love with *every* woman who gives me a cup of tea." Maxwell could not forbear a slight emphasis on the word *every*, and it sufficed to restore that lovely color to her cheek. "I'm extremely

fond of Jimmy; he's my very good friend," he added, "and so I see a good deal of Mrs. Dixon—perforce."

There was an instant of silence, then Maxwell continued: "You think I say that in obedience to the unwritten law that a man shall never compliment one woman to another. Haven't you discovered yet that your nature has on mine the effect of a touchstone? It brings out inevitably the truth."

"I should like to think it," she answered, steadying her handsome head on the white column that upheld it, "for it would mean that in time I should understand you thoroughly, and that—is one of my ambitions." She smiled with a charming quiver of her lip, but above, those uncompromising eyes of hers looked at him.

He faced towards her: "To know me would not mean to understand me," he returned. "You look like a Goddess of Justice, and justice would string me up in no time."

"That isn't fair," she flashed back, "you have no right to presuppose my judgment. I hold that I might deprecate, but would always understand your—failings; you have no right to force on me another part."

"Force on you," he retorted; "why, it flashes out of your eyes at this moment, visible to any fool! Recitade! It's your innate principle of being; it has not been mine,—worse luck,—and if I told you some of my past acts you would freeze silently into a figure of retribution." He had spoken almost savagely, and, catching a note of his own voice, dropped into a laugh. "Dear me, what melodrama!" He laughed again and leaned back, his arms relaxing their tension as they rested folded across his chest.

She pushed the tea-table a little to one side and turned her chair to the fire, so that there lay nothing but the space of glittering parquet and white rug between them; then, restlessly drawing off a band of gold links she wore on her arm, she spoke with hesitation, as she bent the flexible chain into shapes.

"I don't think you have the right to express my opinions," she said; "I challenge you to tell me anything you have done which I cannot—excuse; you must tell me not the bare facts, but the shades of feeling that surrounded them. After all, you have told me a good many of your"—she hesitated—"your escapades and experiences. Have I been so unsympathetic that you cannot trust me further?"

Maxwell stared at her, dealing inwardly with an impulse; with his shrewd eyes and hard face, he was twice as much the creature of impulse as this soft-eyed, red-lipped girl who addressed him. It was an experiment in psychology; he would try it.

He shrugged his shoulders. "I have told you of escapades, yes,

but with a good word for myself somewhere in them. I have told you that I measured out sugar for a grocer in my hard times,—I knew you were no snob. I have told you that I left a gambling-house in my shirt-sleeves and bareheaded on a winter's night, with the rest of my wardrobe forfeit! More folly than guilt. I pleaded guilty to making love to some score of women—more weakness than crime; and so it goes. But to give you a veracious and exact account, chapter and verse, of one of the really darker moments of my existence,—that is another thing, not to be so easily faced."

Their eyes met, hers full of softness and eager listening.

He went on: "If you could hear such a plain tale told without flinching, it would mean your understanding, your friendship for me had triumphed over your nature, and it would be a proof worth much. I am afraid to say where it would land me." He laughed—a short, abrupt sound, that did not break the tingling atmosphere they breathed. "Shall I try the experiment?" he added, looking into her eyes, and they lived a full instant of excited sensation.

"I'm quite ready," murmured the girl, and Maxwell shoved his hands into his pockets and pressed his lips together. It was a leap in the dark. He was used to them. He took his usual gambler's risk on the whole situation.

"Well," he said, drawing a deep breath, "I must carry you to California, and California ten years ago. It was a time in my life when things, having gone very much to the bad, had taken a turn and prospered. I was twenty-eight years old; you will not call that unthinking youth, but I do. I had friends. I was in business and had made money, and took to playing on the stock exchange. I made a small fortune one day, and lost it the next, but no one was much the wiser; one is allowed a good deal of rope in this world—to hang one's self with. I had grown tired of small operations. I went in rather heavily. And one fine, bright spring morning I read ruin on the ticket. Not to be technical,"—he stopped a moment and smiled at her,—"I had to produce fifty thousand dollars that afternoon or fail badly. I was well in anyhow, and this margin was essential. My only hope was that Jameson, a very good friend of mine, might lend me the money, and I made my way to his office."

Maxwell pushed back his chair from the fire; he did not need its warmth; his usually pale face was slowly gathering color.

"He lived on a little square, very green, leafy, and quiet. I stared at the people who passed me, and wondered if they had ever wanted fifty thousand impossible dollars, and so found my way into Jameson's private office. I remember the place with the greatest distinctness. I had often been there, but I think after that morning I knew the

color of Jameson's pen-wiper, and pen-handle, and the stains on the writing-table, and the worn places in his carpet, and just the angle of the door of his open safe, better than I know my own face. He was in, he was alone, and I told my errand. I hadn't gotten half-way through before I knew that it was fruitless, but kept on, and at the end he shook his head. 'I'm awfully sorry,' he said, 'but, my dear fellow, I'm short myself. I wish I could do anything—perhaps Nelson, or Dana——' His man interrupted him by saying that there was some one to see him in the outer office, and he got up and went out, closing the door behind him."

Maxwell stopped a moment and pressed his lips together. The girl could no more have taken her eyes from his face than she could have divined what was coming.

"Go on," she said.

"You say Fate cannot dictate to you," he continued, "but Fate left me alone with Jameson's open safe. I knew him to be a very rich man. I knew the bundles of papers plainly to be seen there were valuable securities. It was Tuesday. I would have staked my soul that in three days the market would turn. Would he handle those papers in three days? Was I desperate enough to take the chance? I walked over and stared into the open shelves. I put my hand in, and, taking out a package, I looked it over. Another. Between them they would answer my purpose. I adjusted two other piles so that their absence would not be noticeable, and then I sat down, and Jameson entered. We talked for a moment; I said good-bye and went out of the room."

Maxwell was still staring at the fire, and so was his listener. He went on rapidly, but without hurry.

"On Thursday I went to Jameson's office again and sat there talking to him with a package on my knee." He stopped and passed his hand over his hair. "Good God! How long it seemed until some one called him. But they did at last, and I was again alone with Jameson's open safe. I laid my bundles in their place and had just returned to my seat when he came back. He talked awhile, and suddenly laid his hand on my arm. 'Dave,' he said, 'it's been worrying me that I never helped you with that money, and I hate to think some other fellow was a better friend than I. (I had told him I was out of my difficulties.) Now, next time, come to me again, and I'll squeeze it out somehow.'"

Maxwell ceased, and the girl put out her hand with a gesture very like a command.

"You told him?" she said, passionately.

"Yes," the young man returned slowly, "I told him, and lost one of the best friends I ever had."

There was silence. A little clock ticked with a sudden, insistent loudness. He had never noticed the sound before. He looked at her a long moment, then leaned back in his chair.

"And now," he said, deliberately, "you have your wish, you know me, and I have lost another."

The girl sat very still and upright, looking into the fire. At last she spoke:

"I am afraid," she said, slowly, "I am afraid you have," and as she spoke something hurt so that she never after felt a pain quite its equal; "and I—I have lost an ideal."

Maxwell paled; that hurt too.

"I was right, wasn't I?" he said; "you are not the sort whose love, or friendship, withstands such a strain. Your sense of right is stronger than mere personal feeling." And into the last words he put something that cut.

She faced him.

"You were quite right," she said; "I have to respect or I can't—love."

They gazed straight into each other's eyes, and he suddenly smiled.

"You beautiful creature," he said, gently, "you are just as you should be; and, though it hurts to have some one think you a scoundrel, it ought not to be worse than to know it yourself; so good-night and good-bye. Angel of Justice! I've had a taste of the last judgment to-day, but perhaps by then I'll have something on the other side of the account."

He rose from his chair, and, without holding out his hand, turned to the door.

"Mr. Maxwell,"—she stood up and held out her hand,—“aren't you going to say good-bye?"

He came back, and, taking her hand, raised it to his lips.

She forgot for a moment everything but what moved her in him, and stood quite still, staring at him with her big, shining eyes.

The man in him was roused.

"Do you know," he said, still holding her hand, "I believe I could make you forgive me—and like me again for a while."

She stood motionless, her eyes chained.

Maxwell crushed her hand in his. "But I won't try. You are not for me, and I know it, so I won't try. Not because it would be wicked, for equally it would be heaven; but because you would come to me some day and look at me with those eyes of yours, and I want to die before I meet an avenging angel."

He dropped her hand and took one step back from her.

The girl stood shaking all over with anger and love.

"How do you know so well how safe your confidence is with me?" she said passionately. "When you dare to say this, how do you know I will not retaliate?"

Maxwell laughed bitterly.

"The same rectitude that judges me will protect me," he said. "Good-bye," and an instant after she stood alone.

She looked about her a moment, and, making her way to the sofa, threw herself on it and lay quite still. How it hurt!—the clock struck six quick little strokes—she had an hour to herself before dressing for dinner. She turned over and lay with her arms on the sofa's end, her forehead resting on them. Something gushed from her eyes—how it hurt! And with all her money, Miss Wetmore never won anything that quite healed the scar.

II.

On a raw day in early March Maxwell walked uptown from his office with a step that derived some of its elasticity from the sudden buoyancy of the market. He had been through a hard month, calculating margins and watching prospects that he had thought fair swiftly darken under the steady downward tendency of the stocks. He and Jimmy Dixon, having gone into a kind of informal partnership in a favorite investment, had met night after night at the Club after getting through their dinner engagements, and talking matters over until they regained some cheerfulness, ended their evenings at Jimmy's house by half-past eleven. Maxwell had gone the first time with some hesitation, and was surprised to find Mrs. Dixon sitting in the well-lighted drawing room, reading by the fire. He had thrown himself into a chair, while Jimmy went to get a paper they wanted and his hostess had gone to the piano and played for him for an hour while the men smoked. He had stopped again on the following night, and thus easily it had come to be a custom, and Maxwell had been grateful for the forbearance which his hostess had shown, and realized what a difference a refuge of the kind might make in a man's life.

The day was darkening to a chill twilight as he reached the dwelling part of the town; he looked about him as he walked more slowly, and, finding himself opposite the Dixons', he hesitated a moment, then crossed the street. She would give him fresh tea and it was six o'clock; she would sympathize with his cheerful mood, without inquiring into its cause; she would play for him—three good reasons for ringing Mrs. Dixon's bell. A cold, blustering wind caught him as he mounted the steps and heightened his opinion of Mrs. Dixon's qualities, and he

followed the man upstairs to the drawing-room in a very softened and approachable frame of mind.

It was a charming room, running across the house, with lots of light, a grand piano, and a fireplace,—Maxwell's three requirements in a living-room. His hostess was reading in one of the big windows; it struck him she had become of a much more studious disposition in the last few weeks, and he wondered what it portended; having known her for two years, it did not occur to him that it rose from a pure love of books.

"Hateful afternoon, isn't it?" Mrs. Dixon rose as she spoke, and, in answer to a plaintive word from Maxwell, ordered tea, and made her way among the rather numerous tables and chairs to the fire. "It was good of you to come in. I feel like being cheered; I am blue."

"But that isn't fair!" Maxwell lounged on the sofa opposite her in a happy state of mental and physical let-down, his fair-hair tossed on his forehead, his light gray eyes less restless than usual. "I came here to laugh and be amused; you musn't go back on me like that."

"The only thing that amuses one isn't to laugh," returned his hostess, playing with the long lace ruffles that frothed over the front of her tea-gown; "it amuses one to be in danger, and one doesn't laugh." She raised her eyes and they met Maxwell's. He stared at her with considerable appreciation of her good looks. She worked no magic as far as he was concerned; she was not a type that interested him; but he saw just how pretty she was and how attractive she might be to some other man, and he included her bright brown eyes and soft color in the sum total of a pleasant hour that afternoon.

"You are wrong," he answered, wondering idly what she meant; "people do laugh in the presence of danger—often."

"Jimmy hasn't laughed much in the last ten days," she retorted, smiling, and, drawing the tray towards her, made his tea in silence.

He took his cup and pointed to the piano.

"Play to me while I sit here and drink this," he said; "it will be heaven. Now, do be good. It is no trouble to those clever fingers of yours and it is the top notch of human happiness to me."

She rose and went to the piano.

"You pasha!" She smiled at him over her shoulder and choosing two or three pieces of music sat down and played.

Maxwell was lulled into a state of material peace, as he had said. He dropped a species of cankering thought that had laid hold on him lately, thought that induced all sorts of questions as to the value of his life and his way of living, thought which had brought a new and very unpleasant seriousness to his moments of solitude. His

life was packed so full of engagements for business and pleasure that he had only broken fragments of time to do this thinking in; but it caught him when he dressed in the morning and when he went to bed at night, and waited for him at unwary intervals during the day. Now, in this atmosphere of warmth, well-being and music he forgot it and enjoyed the haphazard and uncalculating content of his youth. It was good to feel warm, refreshed, and wrapped in melodious sound, and above him, on the mantel-shelf, a vase of roses shed a fragrance over him that filled his cup.

The music stopped. He felt a light touch on his hand.

"Look at that," said Mrs. Dixon; "isn't it beautiful? Jimmy gave it to me an hour ago." She dropped a bracelet into his hands, stood beside him while he looked at it, then held out her arm for him to fasten it in its place. He did so, slowly, methodically, and then, leaning back on the sofa, stared up at her through his half-closed lids—what next?

"David," she began, "you're a strange creature; I've never known a man like you. Did you come just the way you are, or did life make you?"

"I really don't know," he answered, smiling; "I never wasted much thought on it. I haven't the slightest idea what I am like—who has?"

She shook her head. "Oh, lots of people have themselves added up like their household accounts. I don't suppose you have had time. Your natural talents have kept you busy."

He raised his brows: "My natural talents?"

She nodded. "You have two or three powers equal to talents—didn't you know it? The power to make yourself indispensable to people is one; the power to understand, the power to excite them are others; you play on people as I do on the piano. Didn't you know that, either?"

Maxwell suddenly realized how often he had seen Mrs. Dixon in the last month. She thought—what did she think? Well, he was going to know evidently.

"It sounds very nice," he said, clasping his hands behind his head and looking up at her as she stood before him. "I wish you hadn't made it all up. I am indispensable to just one person in this world—myself!"

She had taken a step towards the fire; she turned and looked at him with eyes that glowed. It gave him a sensation, and he answered her look without counting where it would bring him out.

"Name one other person to whom I am indispensable?" he said, and leaned forward to fix her glance with his.

"Shall I?" she returned; "Shall I?" There was a silence; then she moved to the fire.

"David," she began again, "I'm in trouble, and I want you to help me."

His expression changed and grew alert; he listened, and, folding his arms, kept his eyes on her face.

"You will be good to me, won't you?" she went on; "I don't know what to do." She slipped down on a little stool that brought her between him and the fire. Maxwell was bewildered. His mind ran over the past few months and the men who had been attentive to Mrs. Dixon; he could find no rock to split on; money then—perhaps she had been too extravagant even for Jimmy—somehow it wasn't like her.

"Tell me all about it," he said, slowly, "if it will do you any good; but stop and think first; it's beastly to have other people know one's mistakes, even one's friends—perhaps this isn't a mistake, but you know what I mean."

"How good you are!" She turned her soft brown eyes to him; they were suffused with something that glittered like tears. "Perhaps you are right, but I can't help it; I can't decide what to do alone; you must help me."

"Jimmy?" said Maxwell.

She shook her head and blushed crimson; it was a handsome color, and startled him with the strength of feeling it conveyed—Mrs. Dixon did not easily blush.

"Jimmy looks on women as little girls do their dolls," she answered, with a bitterness he had never known in her before. "You are different, you understand, it is wonderful how you understand." She looked up at him with the soft brilliance her heightened color gave her. "I feel there is so much in common between us that I could tell you anything, that my life is transformed by your friendship. A man who loves beauty and color and music, and yet is all a man—that is what I know for the first time. Do you begin to understand, David?"

Maxwell was silent. He had no answer ready, and the idea that was taking shape in his mind roused little but revolt. The silence was growing heavy on the air when the apparition of the servant in the doorway, ushering in a visitor, brought him a most welcome relief. The newcomer was a slight little lady in worn-looking black. She stood rather uncertainly a moment before advancing.

Mrs. Dixon rose, and, sweeping her trailing skirts to meet her, gave much more the impression of barring her passage than of welcoming her as a guest.

"How d'you do?" she said, stiffly. There was almost a question-

mark at the end of her sentence, as though it implied: and what do you do here?

Her visitor was quite sensitive enough to shrink before that note of interrogation.

"I came to borrow a book," she said, not making the added step forward or glancing at Maxwell; "Jessie has so much time on her hands, Mrs. Dixon, that she has finished these already." She held out some volumes. "And I thought I would risk bothering you by asking for another;" then added, with hesitation, "An invalid to please makes one rather importunate, I fear."

Her hostess was relentless.

"I am so sorry; I haven't one, I'm afraid, that she would care for."

It was a definite dismissal, and Maxwell had two good reasons for combating it,—he had a human interest in the weaker side, and he did not want to renew his *tête-à-tête* with Mrs. Dixon.

"May I offer a contribution?" he said, coming forward. "I have a novel of Hichens in the pocket of my overcoat, and it is very much at your disposal."

The little lady turned and faced him. He thought he had never seen a sweeter countenance than was framed in the old-fashioned close-fitting bonnet and black strings.

Mrs. Marshall, may I present Mr. Maxwell?" said Mrs. Dixon, with a hard smile; "though with Mr. Maxwell, as you see, introductions are hardly necessary."

Maxwell advanced and pressed the little shabbily gloved hand held out to him.

"Why should they be?" he said, smiling; "what does ceremony do for us, that we should do so much for ceremony? Ceremony would have forbade my murmuring 'Tea,' when I came in, yet you see it on Mrs. Dixon's table! By the way, where is my second cup, hospitable lady? If you will give one, and Mrs. Marshall is very good, I will let her share the pot."

One woman was flirting with him; the other was tired, down-trodden, and little used to being made much of; he gauged them correctly when he thought that neither one would resent his managing the situation; and in five minutes he had established Mrs. Marshall by the fire with her teacup; had laughed Mrs. Dixon into a good humor, and sat between them recounting stories of a small Western town, where manners and ceremony certainly played a trifling part.

"And yet," he ended, "with few customs and no manners the place had a great deal of charm. To return to your daughter," he

regarded Mrs. Marshall, gravely, "what kind of books does she like?" He handed his cup to Mrs. Dixon as he spoke. "May I have a third draught of tea? You know we go to that dinner dance to-night, and I shall go to sleep if I don't." He turned again to Mrs. Marshall: "Does she like novels or fairy tales?"

"Fairy tales?" repeated Mrs. Marshall, blushing a little, "Why, Mr. Maxwell, how old do you suppose she is?"

Maxwell smiled into the faded face beside him, whose soft blue eyes had the innocent simplicity of youth.

"About ten or twelve, I suppose," he said.

"Just hear him," said Mrs. Marshall, gayly, and Mrs. Dixon laughed too. "Why, she is thirty-two."

Maxwell shook his head: "You women are terribly deceptive," he said, as he took his cup.

"She is a great invalid," said Mrs. Dixon, in that comfortable voice in which one person describes another's doom. "On the sofa all day, and Mrs. Marshall has her hands full, looking after her and providing her with amusement as well."

"It is my pleasure," said Mrs. Marshall, in a low voice, and there was an instant's silence. "Tell me more about your Western village," she added, catching at the first thought that came to change the subject. "It sounds like the place that my son-in-law lived in. I was never there, but, from what my daughter has told me of it, I have a vivid idea of their wild ways. Their town was called Medfield."

"Medfield?" said Maxwell, abruptly; "why, my place was Medfield too."

"Really," cried Mrs. Dixon; "perhaps you met Mrs. Marshall's daughter?"

"My daughter married a Westerner." Mrs. Marshall hesitated. Now that Maxwell knew the place, she seemed to have no desire to connect her accounts of it with his.

But Mrs. Dixon had more curiosity. She had been sorry for the Marshall's, who were connections of her husband's had been rather intrigued by the daughter—this was a chance not to be lost.

"She married a Mr. Gillespie," she said; "a Mr. Roger Gillespie. Did you ever meet them?"

Maxwell turned to Mrs. Marshall: "Your daughter is Mrs. Roger Gillespie?" he asked.

Mrs. Marshall assented. "Mr. Gillespie died four years ago," added she, "and my daughter has had a serious illness from which—" She made a gesture as though she could go no further, and, rising, she held out her hand to Mrs. Dixon.

"It is abominably late," she said; "I have trespassed frightfully, but it has been so pleasant. I must fly home to Jessie."

Her light steps took her swiftly to the door.

"I must go too," said Maxwell. "May I see you home, Mrs. Marshall? It is late for you to be about alone."

"Oh, I am quite used to it," she answered; "I'll take the book, though, if I may."

Maxwell pressed Mrs. Dixon's hand: "I'll see you at the Greshams," he said. "Have you forgotten that you promised me the cotillion?"

She shook her head and gave him a smiling glance in answer, and he left the house with the older woman. As they walked down the steps together, he took gentle possession of her hand and drew it through his arm.

"I am going to take you home," he said; "I have some things to hear."

Mrs. Marshall looked up at him as the lamplight fell on his face. It looked stern and hard, but, as her daughter had before her, she liked it.

"Jessie and I were intimate friends," Maxwell went on slowly, "but we quarrelled—and parted. I did not speak of our friendship to Mrs. Dixon, because I am not sure how Jessie feels about it now." He looked down at the resigned sweetness of the face beside him. "Has she never told you of me?"

"I have never heard your name," returned Mrs. Marshall.

"Never heard my name?" repeated Maxwell, and was silent.

"She told me few particulars of her life—her five years of life with Roger Gillespie," Mrs. Marshall proceeded slowly; "little of her friends, or his. It could not have been a secret to you, if you knew her then, that she was not on happy terms with him."

"On happy terms with him!" repeated Maxwell, roughly, "do women live on happy terms with beasts?"

The little hand on his arm shook.

"What right have you to speak so?"

"Right!" Maxwell shook his head. "No right to do anything or say anything that displeases you—forgive me," and they walked on in silence.

"Dear Mrs. Marshall," Maxwell pressed the hand that lay on his arm, "you are one of the people one feels close to in a moment; one look in your kind eyes, and one frees one's mind of the fear of being misunderstood. I knew your daughter so well, and cared so much about her, that I cannot pretend to you to be an ordinary

acquaintance. Let me know how things stand with her. Surely she has no need of friends, of protection, of money—Gillespie was rich when I knew them."

"He died bankrupt—having broken her heart," Maxwell heard the first hard note he had caught in her voice,—“and driven her to make unwise friends, he left her penniless.”

"How like him!" He set his teeth. "How like him!"

"I, having a broken fragment of a fortune left," she hurried on, "my other child and my husband being dead, went for my daughter and brought her home—so ill—I never thought to keep her. She has a mortal disease: the doctors say her present life is a mere respite." Her voice shook. She swayed a little, and, standing in the darkness of the quiet street, she tried to check the sob that choked her, and Maxwell put his arm about her in silence. A moment and she had recovered herself, and gently drew away from him.

"Will you come and see her?" she said; "she will seem like another creature to you—be ready for that, but, however painful your meeting may be, it will bring a warmth and interest into her miserably lonely life it has not known for years. We have few friends," she added, "and most of them have forgotten us."

"Let me come now," Maxwell answered.

They walked along and Mrs. Marshall stopped in front of some high, brown steps. She laid her hand on his arm.

"You will be very good to her?" she said.

"What do you think?" he returned, looking down into her face. "Can you trust me?"

She gave him a little nod that sent a surge of pleasure through him, it was so full of faith, and they walked up the steps together, together penetrated the dark, ill-aired hall, and made their way to the third story of the house.

Bidding him wait, she went into the room, and, closing the door behind her, gave a comprehensive glance about her, to see that all was in its usual order, then fixed her eyes on the slender figure on the lounge.

"Mother!" Two eager hands were held out to her. "Come and sit down, and tell me what you have done. You are late, did you know it? You dissipated creature—roaming in the dark!"

"I have brought a visitor," said Mrs. Marshall, gently coming forward and taking the slim, hot fingers that sought hers, "an old friend of yours, he is waiting outside now."

The big dark eyes flashed. "Mother! A strange man to come without a word of preparation!" She drew herself back, as though to shrink into the sofa that held her.

"But this is a word of preparation," murmured Mrs. Marshall, feeling convicted, and wondering why it had seemed so simple when Maxwell was with her. "He says you knew him well, he seems to really care, dear, about your illness—his name is Maxwell."

The change in the face before her startled her.

"Not David?" The younger woman caught her gently by the shoulders and shook her: "Speak, speak quickly—not David?"

"There can be no other," assented Mrs. Marshall. "Yes, David."

The young woman sat upright and stared at her with brilliant eyes.

"David, David," she repeated. "To see David again. Open the door quickly mother—quickly." Her pale cheek was flushed with bright color, her big dark eyes shone with light. "Quickly, quickly!" she said.

Mrs. Marshall moved over to the door and opened it. She had lain in the shadow of death and sickness so long, that any vivid life seemed like a draught of health.

"Will you come in?" she said, gravely, looking up at Maxwell, who was leaning against the banisters, held by a long train of painful thought. He started, and, advancing into the lamplight from the dim light outside, took in no details—only saw the vivid countenance that shone at him across the little room.

"David!" The word came whispering to him.

"My dear Jessie!" returned the man, and, reaching her side, he caught her hands in his; then sat down by her and stared at the lovely wreck before him. It was a long time, it seemed to Mrs. Marshall, before they spoke; then it was Jessie's voice, in that same vibrant whisper.

"How long is it?" she said. "Seven years and one month, isn't it, David, since you went away?"

He nodded: "Yes, seven years and one month."

"I've been on my back for nearly four years of it," she went on, slowly, "so I've had plenty of time to set my thoughts and remembrances in order. But you have been roving——"

He shook his head. "I went to Chicago, then I came here, and I've been here ever since. I belong here—I've done well."

There was a pause, and, as Mrs. Marshall slipped out of the room, Maxwell still held her daughter's hands.

"Why didn't you let me know?" he began; but she interrupted him with something that, though it was a smile, gave him a contraction of the heart.

"How likely!" she said, and gently drew away her hands. "You, with whom I had quarrelled for good, who had gone to another city

—who was I knew not where—with I knew not whom—married, perhaps. Are you married?" Her eager glance took in his prosperous air, but ended, puzzled, on his face.

"What do you think?" he returned, with a sort of tender lightness. "Do I look married, Jessie."

She shook her head: "I can't tell. You are not happy, if you are married; your eyes look thirsty, David. Is it for money or love—or what?"

"I have enough money," answered Maxwell; "I don't want love, that I know of; but I do want something badly—clever of you to find it out, but you always knew strange things."

"I didn't know enough not to ruin my life, did I?" She made the statement with no suggestion of self-pity, but as one speaks of an acknowledged truth. He moved restlessly under the weight of his share in it.

"Tell me," he said, "What happened after I left? I have never heard a word since." It was not strictly true; but the rumors he had heard he had chosen to ignore, and a lie was never difficult to Maxwell, barring a mean lie; there the distinction lay sharp within him.

"What happened after you left?" she repeated. "A great many things. So you never heard of me afterwards. I was less lucky. I heard of you as making love to the next woman you met. It was the turning of the scale, David; I pursued the path we had found together, only I followed it without the light of passion."

"Don't," said Maxwell.

"Why not?" She looked steadily up at him. "It's the truth. Do you think I haven't faced it and named it in all these years? I have been back over the old ground until I found just where I sinned first, just where I took my worst step, and I have thanked God I had no children to inherit my instincts."

Maxwell turned from her and looked about the room, as though it were a cage. Shut in its narrow circumference, he could not escape the accusations of his own thoughts.

"Your instincts were not to blame," he said, roughly; "you fell in with me at a bad moment."

She shook her head. "I don't blame myself for loving you, not so much either for—for letting you love me—but for the vanity of my quarrel with you—and for what followed."

Maxwell faced her.

"What did follow? Did you accept the homage that fool offered you, with his money and his clever wits? He was better, you thought, than Gillespie?"

The room was very still; the glittering eyes that looked straight

into his own gave Maxwell a sensation he had never experienced,—a body crucified, a soul enduring. A consciousness of what it would be to have years in which to study your own sins held him like a vise.

"How you have expressed it!" she said. "He was better than Gillespie! It's rough, but it's the truer. But I've had one excuse you have not had for your sins, David. I was desperate from a not ignoble cause: I loved you—loved you as people do sometimes, poor things—and I danced and sang and sinned to forget you; can you say as much?"

The man still looked down at her. There was silence.

"No," he said, "no—I have never loved any one, that I know of, like that. I came nearer with you, but no—I—I forgot you."

Their eyes met, and Maxwell stooped and, catching her hand, kissed it. Mrs. Marshall moved gently into the room and stood looking down at them.

"It is after seven," she said; "you will be late for your dinner-party, Mr. Maxwell."

He drew out his watch. "You are right." He rose. "I must go. I'll come again soon—to-morrow, if I may." He looked down into the fragile countenance, whose eyes shone on him.

"Come, please." Her low voice had the same curious tone in it that he remembered.

He shook hands with Mrs. Marshall and left them, and, walking through the brightly lighted streets, felt confused. He had too many thoughts to deal with. He was oblivious of the chill air, and lit a cigarette as he took his way to his rooms. He bathed and dressed. As he did so, his thoughts reverted to Mrs. Dixon a moment, and, standing before the glass to part his hair, he was suddenly aware of a look of self-satisfaction that lay about his eyes and lips. He put down the comb and, sitting abruptly in an arm-chair by the little hard-coal fire, dragged out his thoughts and looked at them. The result was one low-voiced sentence; and, getting up, he brushed his hair savagely, got into his coat, and a few moments later was driving rapidly along in a hansom towards the upper part of the town.

He was five minutes late already, but he stopped at a florist's and, glancing about, drew in the fragrance of the heavy-headed roses, undecided amid the wealth of color. The brightly lit shop was overpowering with its confusion of vivid tints, but none of it pleased him. Gathering up a double handful of fiesia and another of mignonette, he gave the man a hasty direction and, getting back into his hansom, arrived at his destination just in time to come down with Mrs. Dixon and Jimmy into the drawing-room.

He was glad to have his oysters, hungry for his soup, and was

barely civil to his neighbors until he had eaten it; then turned grim and searching eyes on their smooth, handsome, vacuous countenances. Polite banalities were beyond him this evening, and he tried, without much hope of success, something resembling a sensible conversation, and then, finding himself savagely sarcastic at the answers he got, made a shot at lighter talk on the other side. The folly that met him was not even genuine, so he relapsed into silence and shut his lips on the vigorous abuse that leaped up within him. There were times in life when conventionality made him want to attack its adherents with a weapon, and he smoked his cigar afterwards with an occasional surly nod to punctuate Jimmy's friendly chatter.

The smooth parquet of the ballroom was an absurdity to him, dancing the act of fools, and he sat by Mrs. Dixon with an expression she did not find it difficult to read.

"Are you bored?" she asked, smiling.

He laid his arm on the back of her chair, and, facing her, forgot everything but how he longed to cut the evening short.

"Bored?" he repeated. "Stiff! Are you amused?" There was an appeal in his voice.

"Rather," she said, "but not enough to keep you fastened here. Come, we will go, and I'll drive you down. Jimmy said he would see us later—he cut this."

"You are an angel!" The ladies who had thought Maxwell's voice at dinner as harsh as his manner would have hardly believed it could convey gratification with something so nearly resembling a caress.

Mrs. Dixon rose and, leaning on his arm, murmured little remarks to him as they went out, and had half her pleasure in the interested glances that followed Maxwell's preoccupied face and her early withdrawal.

They drove down in silence, and, as he rang her bell, he turned to her gratefully.

"How good you have been," he said.

She laid a gloved hand on his arm. "You are coming in for five minutes. I gave up the dance for you—you'll do that much for me, won't you?" and she entered the hall. There was no alternative, and he followed her into the drawing-room and had a pang of physical pleasure at the bright wood fire, the scent of the flowers, the beauty and comfort of the room.

He poured out the whiskey and water to which she invited him, and felt as though perhaps he had been a fool after all, as he saw her go to the piano without a word. She sat down, touched the keys, and looked across at him.

"Do you remember this?" she said.

He shook his head: "Rubenstein?"

She nodded and played on.

Maxwell lit a cigarette, and, walking over to the piano, stood near it. He was tired out with his mental struggle and storm of the afternoon and evening, and, with a deep inhalation of his cigarette, he let his responsibilities and regrets slip from him.

Mrs. Dixon came to a full stop and, dropping her hands into her lap, looked up at him: "Of what are you thinking?"

He looked down at her: Not of your beautiful shoulders and bright eyes, he thought, and in some way she felt it.

"Not of me, that is plain," she went on, smiling; "and I think I deserve some of your thoughts—" she hesitated—"because—" her color rose—"because I give you all mine." She set her white teeth as she finished. The murder was out.

Maxwell smiled and shook his head.

"Don't talk nonsense," he said; "you'll turn my head."

"Could I?" She had risen and stood leaning against the piano near him. "Could I? I'm afraid not. Instead, cure me of a trouble I am falling into; help me, won't you?"

"Into what are you falling?" said Maxwell, and looked down into her eyes.

"Into love," she answered, and, drawing a deep breath, gave back his look.

For a moment he sank as into a deep pool, was conscious only of her white throat, her red lips, the gleaming wells of light in which his glance rested. It would make no great odds, how would it harm him or her? Was she to be harmed? He had always let such scruples take care of themselves—Jimmy—he pulled himself back, quenched the fire that had transformed his countenance, and stood cold and straight beside her; then, walking to the hearth, found his cigarette burning his fingers. He put it out.

"Don't," he said, slowly; "I've tried it two or three times. It's a poor plan, and never works."

There was again silence, and it was prolonged. He threw his dead cigarette into the fire and turned to her. She was laying the music back in the stand with hands that trembled, and as she shut the piano she turned also and their eyes met.

Jimmy, coming into the room, joined Maxwell with a gentle slap on his shoulder and a laugh:

"Have you two retired for more music?" he said, and Maxwell gently shook his hand off his shoulder.

"Just that," he said; "and now I'll retire to bed," and, with a friendly good-night, he left them.

III.

It was such a week as occurs sometimes in April. The buds and flowers were springing into bloom under the eyes of winter. The magnolia trees in the great city were covered with blossoms; crocuses and tulips brightened the sheltered patches, and the very air held an invitation. Forth! Forth! it seemed to say: leave these sterile stones and heated tenements! Forth among the fields and woods, the upturned earth and calling brooks.

Dixon and Maxwell would have clothed their thoughts in other language, but it was in obedience to just such a feeling that they drove out to Dixon's farm on one of these warm afternoons.

The ample old farm-house they barely entered; it was the farm that Dixon cared about, the stables and kennels, the barns and stretches of well-ordered pasture. They wandered over it all, played with the dogs, inspected the horses and cattle, and Maxwell, leaving Dixon to give some orders, sauntered off by himself across the rough lawn in front of the old house. In the transforming sunlight of the spring, the little hills looked purple, the furrows in the fields had violet shades along the brown, and vivid bits of green leapt softly into view.

It stirred the depths in him, those troubled uneasy depths that had made life bitter in the last few months. Suddenly, standing silent, inexpressive, with his hands clasped behind him, looking across the soft distances beyond the fields, he felt that he had come to a turning-point in his ways. It had been coming, this uncomfortable necessity to ally himself with other gods than Mammon; he saw with an abrupt insight the unnoted signs of its approach stretch back over a year or more. It had begun in a distaste for the society of just such people as himself, in an occasional scruple that he had fostered and obeyed, as a man gratifies the caprices of a child, whose ideas amuse him by their folly, and last it showed in sudden brief moments of shame. Horrid sensation! His hands gripped tightly behind him and his lips curled savagely in resistance to its encroachments. He could thrash another man who threw a hard word at him, but he could not very well attack himself. And the upshot? The upshot was a ridiculous and absurd desire to have that costly luxury—a clean conscience.

At this point in his reflection Dixon joined him, and, getting into the trap, they started for a little out-of-town road-house Dixon had discovered, where they were to dine early and take a train for the city.

"Pretty good kind of day," remarked Dixon, as they trotted over the hard road, "I think we showed our sense, eh, Max?"

"Rather," returned his companion, and there was silence.

Business so long banished at last reared its head.

"I got that information from Reynolds," said Dixon, and Maxwell nodded.

"So I supposed," he answered. "What was he talking about this morning, with so much gesticulation?" He asked the question idly enough, but became aware of its pertinence as he saw Jimmy's face. To an ordinary observer it kept its usual juvenile simplicity; to Maxwell it gained that touch of the fox—you could hardly call it wolf—that marked the moments when Jimmy's business instinct was aroused.

"I was just going to talk to you about it," Dixon began slowly. "He wants us both."

"What for?" Maxwell was staring ahead at the sorrel backs of the horses.

"Why, on Casey's board," said Dixon, "to fill Dick's place and Wilbur's."

"My dear Jim, you are raving." Maxwell raised his eyebrows. "Reynolds wants us? You mean Casey wants us."

The younger man shook his head. "There is more than meets the eye," he said, with a smile. "I said I'd have to talk it over with you. There's money in it—plenty—but it isn't exactly in my line. The idea is this: Casey and Reynolds are at a deadlock. If we are proposed, Casey will be delighted and pass us in—Reynolds wants us to go in and then be converted to his views and vote with him."

Maxwell threw back his head and uttered a short laugh; it resembled a bark.

"Simple, that," he said; "I recognize Reynolds."

"I know it sounds unfriendly to Casey," began Dixon, but Maxwell interrupted him with a hard smile he sometimes wore:

"Sounds?" he repeated.

"I know, I know," went on the younger man; "but as Reynolds says, 'Business is business,' and Casey is behaving like a fool in the whole matter. Some one will come in, and why not we?"

Maxwell remained silent and Dixon continued: "I'm sorry about Casey, but he really is an impossible man to manage this affair. It needs common sense and finesse to handle the railroads, and he uses neither."

"He has plenty of common sense," retorted Maxwell; "he's not much of a liar, I admit."

"Well, well, call it what you want," pursued Dixon; "you can't talk unmodified truth to a railroad, come now—and Reynolds is a very shrewd chap—and, Max, it would be a big thing—it really would."

There was silence. Their road wound through ploughed fields with here and there a barn and a little house and some trees. It took no singular beauty in the landscape for the world to be beautiful on such an afternoon, and Maxwell drew in a deep breath of the air.

"I like Casey," he said.

"Casey's all right," assented Dixon, "but you can like a man and vote against him."

"It can be done," Maxwell answered, slowly; "I've no doubt some one will do it if we don't. I'll think it over, Jim. Casey, I know, has laid himself open to it. You've got to keep on the right side of a man like Reynolds, if you are going to work with him at all, and he has played the fool in not doing so—I've seen that all along. I've a great belief in the company and that there is a lot of money in it—and then, as you said, someone else will do it if we don't. Is that the place? That little stucco building?"

"That's it," said Dixon, and they drove up to the door.

The place was like nothing that Maxwell had ever seen before. It was a small inn kept by an Italian, who had drifted to that unlikely spot as the foreman of a gang of laborers, and, having prospered, had adopted the country as his own and tried to make his habitation like the birthplace he had left. Outside the little dining-room was a courtyard roofed with a trellis of vines that were just beginning to put out tufts of budding leaves, and four or five tables stood on the bricked floor beneath the twisted tendrils of the vine. Even on so beautiful a day, however, April would not permit them to sit out of doors, and they found a table near a wide window opening on the little courtyard. It was early twilight when the two men sat down and ordered the simple meal that the place provided, with its *spécialité de la maison*,—some kind of macaroni.

The evening was still and mild. Maxwell threw his coat on a chair near by, and, passing his hands over his fair hair, smiled at the young man opposite him.

"This is delightful," he said, "and I'm hungry, too, Jim, after that drive. By Jove, that's a handsome girl!" He broke off, his usual look, when his eyes fell on a woman, of a trained expert gathering evidence, banishing the light in his eyes. "Don't turn, there's plenty of time, they are sitting down; but look in a moment, she is worth seeing."

A moment later Jimmy swung about in his chair, and, looking over the little room, saw the newcomer. She was worth seeing, as Maxwell had said. Her black hat showed her white brow and masses of shining yellow hair. Her skin was of a superb fairness, the arrogant eyelids that drooped over her light-blue eyes were white as snow, and beneath her eyes lay the tints of a tea-rose. To Dixon she was almost repellant; he resented the imperious curve of her red lips and he shrugged his shoulders as he faced Maxwell again.

"Not for you, eh?" returned the older man, slowly; "now that's my idea of a woman,—from a pagan point of view," he added, smiling.

Then he went on, with a change of voice, "but I know her—I'm sure I know her; why it's Mrs. Brandyce—there's something wrong here, old man; I wish we were anywhere else." His face darkened as he spoke in a very low voice, and Dixon leaned back in his chair and unfolded his napkin.

"The man," he said, "is then not——"

"Not Brandyce," returned Maxwell; and they began on their oysters in silence. They talked of a play, a bit of gossip, the opera, and it was not until they were half through with their macaroni that Maxwell laid his hand on the other's arm.

"Forget the name I mentioned," he said; "it was excessively stupid of me to blurt it out in that way; wipe it from your memory, will you, as best you can?"

"Certainly," returned Dixon, and they talked again of other things.

The twilight deepened as they drank their coffee; the moon had risen, and the small lamps set about the place were lit.

"My dear Jimmy," Maxwell smiled, as he leaned his arms on the table and studied the face of his host, "are you bothered because I don't chime in with Reynold's views at once? Don't worry! No doubt I shall see it in the same light as you do when we get to town; meanwhile, I'll think it over. That's a nice wine."

Dixon nodded and filled his glass. "What do you think of the little place altogether?" he said.

"First-rate," returned Maxwell, "only it's a romantic spot, Jim, and a direct encouragement to inconvenient and costly thoughts. Don't come here often, or you might be converted to other ideas, and where would Mrs. Dixon's pearls come from then? Who could plan a syndicate here; now, who could? Tell me that."

Dixon also rested his arms on the table and stared into the other man's face.

"I believe you really mean it!" he said, slowly. "What rot, Max! It would be a first-rate place for the transaction of any quiet——"

"——bit of business that ought not to see the light of day, eh, Jim?" Maxwell's face hardened.

"Bosh!" Jimmy struck a match. "What do you think of that cigar?"

Maxwell drew in a whiff of the tobacco.

"Good!" he said, "and the wine is excellent—heady, though, and inclines me to be poetical.

"Fire away." Jimmy leaned his chin on his palm, his elbow still on the table. "Give us some—what's the brand? Kipling or Omar?"

Maxwell laughed. "My dear James," he returned, "you are such a likely receptacle for divine overflowings, aren't you? If I fell in

a ditch, you would pick me out and guide my staggering footsteps home, but, if I had an inward mortal throe, you'd recommend turtle soup."

"First-rate thing, turtle soup," said Jimmy, stoutly, and they both laughed.

"I'll go and look up the horses." Dixon rose as he spoke. "They might as well take us to the station; Tim is to meet us there." And he went through the inn to the stable.

Maxwell swung his chair so that he could look out into the darkness beyond him, and sat very still, his cigar between his lips. He heard vaguely a colloquy with the waiter, a word of horses, and then silence fell on the place. The other people, only two or three tablesful had gone. As he thought of the handsome creature he had seen, he had another mental vision,—of a man with an especially upright open face, who stood in rough hunting-clothes, with his pipe held in his hand, and laughed with merriment, such merriment as made the woods ring,—a sense of regret invaded him, as this figure passed through his mind; then he slipped back into his own thoughts.

"Mr. Maxwell," said a woman's voice, "I would like to speak to you a moment," and she sat down beside him. He rose, then dropped back into his chair.

They looked at each other; her heavy white lids quivered; her red lips compressed tightly a moment; then she spoke:

"I'm in your hands," she said.

His eyes met hers very full.

"They are excellent hands for the purpose," he answered; "they do not belong to a spy."

There was a moment's silence, and a delicate color flooded her cheek.

"Thank you," she said, and made a movement as though she would rise, then sat still. Maxwell folded his arms, and, leaning on the table, stared gravely at her.

"I would go, if I were you," he said, slowly; "because if you stay, I shall communicate some of my thoughts to you, and I'm crazy to-night, more or less; besides—" he paused significantly.

She shook her head.

"He won't come back," she said; "I told him I wanted to speak to you; he will wait for me." She also rested her arm on the table.

"What are your thoughts?" she continued.

Maxwell looked into her eyes.

"I was thinking how ill suited our souls and our bodies were," he said. "I have a strong sheath, and my soul cowers in the corner of it; and in your beautiful tenement it's about the same."

She turned from him a moment, looking towards the lights, the tables, the scene of simple comfort with its added touch of picturesqueness.

"You're wrong," she said; "mine is dead and buried inside me; it happened when Richard made love to another woman."

Maxwell again had his vision of her husband and his honest ringing laugh. He struck his open hand lightly on the table.

"I don't believe it," he said.

The woman beside him faced him with her proud eyes and bitter mouth.

"She told me herself," she said.

"Then she lied," said Maxwell. And there was a moment's silence. Then Mrs. Brandyce shook her head.

"She was my best friend."

Maxwell laid his hand lightly on hers, as it lay on the table beside him. "Did you ever ask him?" he said.

She gave him a look, and rose.

Maxwell stood beside her.

"Take my advice," he said, gently: "tell him the lie you believe about him."

She kept silence.

"And then tell him the rest of the story."

She turned on him with eyes ablaze, that held a question.

"I've told you," he said, "I'm not a spy. But you won't forget what I say; you can't, and you'll do it, too! Good-night."

She turned and took a step away, then faced about and held out her hand. He held it an instant; she withdrew it, and, crossing the room, disappeared from his view.

Maxwell dropped back into his chair and looked out at the moonlight beyond, where it quivered along the even lines of the court-yard and sitting very still plunged into painful thought.

What manner of man was he to judge another? Having that afternoon entertained high thoughts and comforted his pride with resolutions, he had within the hour paltered with temptation. This scheme—what was it but the product of a corrupt habit of mind? Half business was conducted on that basis—yes—but Casey was his friend. Under what flag would he gain the ground from which he was to fight that friend?

This woman whom he was judging in his heart was at least miserably convinced of the faithlessness of the husband whom she contemplated betraying; and he—Maxwell—was he not trusted by the man for whom he was to lay this trap? How strong was the power of his own devious thought! He had shuffled the truth out of sight so often

that it had become the custom of his mind to do so. Was he to draw his last breath thick with lies? Leaning in the window he drew in a breath of the pure air outside, and heard a step beside him.

"Are you ready?" said Jimmy.

"Wait a moment," said Maxwell, and, turning, he faced his host. "Jim," he said, "I've been thinking over that scheme of Reynolds, and he'll have to use another pair of hands than mine."

Dixon stood silent, and Maxwell proceeded slowly.

"You can go ahead, if you like; but I won't go in for this. I don't criticise the scheme; it's done every day. I don't mean to call any one names, and you could retort that most of the snug little sum I have laid away was made in some such manner. I don't pretend to be consistent, but this thing I will not do."

There was another silence, and Dixon had colored a dark red when he spoke.

"What's the idea?" he said, slowly. "Kingdom come?"

"Perhaps it's a sneaking desire to cheat the devil at the end," returned Maxwell; "but, upon my honor, I never thought of that. I am sick of lies and having some one else pay the shot; that's all. Are the horses here?"

"At the door," said Dixon. And they walked away together.

IV.

THE music swelled, diminished, rose again in a mighty outburst and leaning over the audience seemed to drown them in its storm, then dying away, suddenly was extinguished. For an instant no one moved, then the crowd began its usual insensate hurry to leave the great auditorium.

Maxwell still sat quiet, and it was not until the polite elderly man beside him suggested that he would like to reach the aisle that he realized that he must take up his hat and go.

He was still so profoundly sunk in his own thoughts that he stumbled as he reached the outer steps, and, with his overcoat over his arm, his hat in his hand, he walked slowly away from the concert-hall and down the nearest street.

It was early, not more than ten o'clock in the evening, and the streets were filled with people whom the spring air had enticed out of their houses. Maxwell, looking about him vaguely for a refuge where he could sit quiet and struggle with the idea that had taken possession of him, saw the lighted windows of a small café where he sometimes took a glass of beer. He walked in and sat down. Having ordered his beer, he lit a cigarette and, settling in his chair, gave himself up to thought.

For months he had been getting ready for the sacrifice, uncon-

ssciously preparing the altar, and now he had the victim to lay before his new god—the God of Virtue—and that victim was himself. To clear his conscience—this lately awakened, clamoring conscience that had grown in a few months to such terrible stature—to clear his conscience of the weight of his past sins, he had felt he must sacrifice something. He had supposed the offering must be money; he had made much of late—it had come pouring in ready for the demand; and now there had fallen on him the fiat of the god: it was not his money only he asked of him—it was himself.

Sitting there listening to the music and wondering how he should settle a certain moral debt in his life, compromising like the man of business he had trained himself to be, preparing to pay ten per cent. on the dollar, there had sprung into his mind the one way to settle the whole score,—to give himself.

The waiter put the glass before him. Maxwell drank a draught of the cool yellow liquid and glanced about him.

How preposterous his mad thoughts were! Here he sat, free, with everything in life before him. Was there a sane man among the men he knew who would admit that he owed such a reparation? What had he done, after all, but live as other men lived, more than half mankind? Why should he be ridden by such a devil of remorse—he who had never cared a brass farthing about the consequences in life? It was not his fault that Fate had so juggled with the cards that he had always come out ahead. He had not sought to spare himself, but somehow had been spared: he had never paid his shot. He stood free, still young in strength and vitality, with money in his purse and nothing but this cursed morbid new-born conscience to arrest his upward path. If it would let him alone, he would live an excellent life. He would marry; he would make his wife happy; he would work for his children, perhaps make a name for himself; he felt the power within him. Was it not all an admirable ambition? And he would set aside and trample on his weaknesses, he would make love to no more women, risk no man's money, cease to speculate in his business, expect moderate returns. Was this not a life to be commended, a life worth offering to whatever Power rules the world? And now, out of the open had dropped this cruel decree, this straight and narrow way; all his proud rewards snatched from his virtue, the virtue to stand alone, his only happiness—it was too much—he would not do it.

How had it come to him? He had been thinking, pondering, trying to devise a way by which those two friendless women should have the money they needed for their wants, money which they would not take from him, and out of his plans for Mrs. Marshall and her daughter had sprung this terrible idea.

Maxwell finished his beer and rose. He would go and see them.

The sight of Jessie would convince his conscience that no law of God or man could ask him to marry that wreck of what was once a woman he loved.

He threw his coat over his arm, went out, called a cab, hastily gave the man the direction, and, leaning his arms on the doors of the hansom, set his teeth and arrayed his batteries against himself. It was preposterous, of course. No man need ruin his own life, need instil subtle poison at the root of his own spirit. Must he live the caretaker of that ruin and die childless? The cruel words formed themselves relentlessly and would not leave him, but floated before his eyes on the very air.

Feeling the need to calm his outward self, he tried to put aside thought, and, leaning back, caught a glimpse of his face in the little mirror of the hansom.

The vigor, the strength, the possibility of passion in his own countenance smote him like a revelation. There were tired lines about his eyes that blazed gray and ardent from beneath his brows; yes, but what of that? He had been a fool of late and thought life's pleasures over. The wearied look that had settled on his features, carving stern lines on them, was part of this stupidity. Life held new joys, joys that he had never contemplated; a home, a wife, children; was he to throw these at the feet of his old worn-out passion to expiate his past? It would be to desecrate them. Who could ask it?—no.

The hansom stopped. Maxwell paid the man and let him go. It was nearly eleven o'clock, but he knew that neither mother nor daughter went early to their beds, for fear of the sleepless nights they shared in common, and, ringing the bell, he told the servant he was expected and would go up stairs. He came there often with flowers and fruit and books for Jessie, and the woman smiled on him and watched him mount the staircase with a kind of vicarious pleasure; the world is less dreary when even some one else has friends who seek them out in trouble; it puts meaning into such words as love and kindness.

Maxwell knocked.

"Come in," said a voice.

He opened the door, and as he did so was overwhelmed by his own folly. Had he come there to harden his heart—poor fool!

The room was brightly lit by two lamps. It was, notwithstanding its poverty, a very pleasant room, and made a curious appeal. Its freshness, the painstaking cleanness and daintiness of it, told of what such things meant to the two women who lived within its dark walls, for little sunlight reached it, as Maxwell knew.

Jessie lay on the sofa reading, a lamp behind her head, in her customary white wrapper, that Mrs. Marshall washed and ironed in

the other room, where she slept and cooked and did all she tried to keep out of her child's sight.

The younger woman was alone. Mrs. Marshall did not sit in her usual seat by the lamp. Maxwell stood an instant in the doorway.

"David!" The slight figure on the sofa shook a little, one slender hand was held out to him, the other kept her place in a book in her lap. "Come in. Mother will be here soon. What happy wind blew you hither?"

Maxwell came in and, shutting the door, dropped his hat and coat on a chair near by. Coming forward, he took his accustomed place near her sofa. Her dark eyes rested on him noticing his evening clothes and the brilliant shining of his eyes.

"Where have you been?" she went on. "Dining? The play?"

Maxwell shook his head. "I dined alone and went to hear some music. It was beautiful. I wish you could have heard it."

She gave him her quiet smile, born of those years of patience. "It is quite enough to see you in an evening. I am not so exacting as to expect music, too. What put us in your head? Am I to thank Beethoven or Richard Strauss?"

Maxwell leaned back and, putting his hands in his pockets, tipped his chair a little.

"Tschaikowski, as it happened," he answered, not meeting her eyes, and he plunged, as he always did in life. "Look here, Jessie," he began, then stopped, dropped his chair to a level, and squared himself to face her. "My dear," he said, and stopped again.

She was lying back as always on her big pillow, her slender hands clasped in her lap, her dark eyes riveted on him, her lips unsmiling, closed in deep lines of sadness. There was a moment's silence, Maxwell's thoughts stammering in his brain. Then Jessie spoke:

"Is it so hard to say, David?" Her low voice, with its spent sound, went through him. He stared straight into the gleaming eyes that watched him.

"Listen," he said. "You must leave this place, Jessie; you must have a window opening on the sea, you must have different surroundings, and you must let me give them to you. When will you go?"

The frail figure opposite to him seemed to stiffen, as though shot through with electricity. A rich scarlet color poured into her face, and for an instant Maxwell saw her as she had been—how exquisitely her wild beauty had bloomed! There was an instant of it only; then her heart claimed back those drops, demanded them, if it was to work at all, and she grew white as her blood resumed its courses.

"David!" The soft contralto had grown harsh. "The one kind of return I cannot accept for having loved you is money. I have

had misery, humiliation, and disease. That coin I have been paid in, but one thing I will not endure—money from your hands.”

Maxwell's eyes were chained to hers; yes, it was to be done to-night—now.

“My dear,” he said, “I am not offering you my money, but myself.” He stopped and, leaning forward, laid his open palm beside her hand. “Will you have me, Jessie?”

She lay still, quite motionless, her eyes grown large, brilliant, with something like tears in them. She put out her fingers and touched his palm lightly with their tips.

“My dear boy,” she said, “my blessed boy.”

Maxwell caught her fingers and pressed them in a clasp that hurt.

“We will get married, won't we, Jessie?” he went on, and smiled. She drew his hand to her lips and kissed it.

“David,” she said, then dropped it gently. “Of course,”—she looked at him with wonderful shining eyes,—“of course, it's impossible, David, dear. This is the end of it, but after this it's quite a different world to live in.”

Maxwell took her hand again. “Impossible?” he said; “Why? It is not only possible, but easy,—so easy it shall be done before you know it. We need not bother with ceremonial; a license, a minister to come here and read the service, and the thing is done; and I will take you both to the country near by and be with you as much as I can till May's end, then get a long holiday and spend it making you happy. It's quite simple, after all, isn't it? We have no one to ask but Mrs. Marshall. I think she will consent.” Again he smiled and again her face grew radiant.

“David, don't tempt me, don't. I have suffered so much torture. I'm not responsible. Wretches on the rack recant sometimes, cry out, and betray even their lovers.” She smiled into his eyes. “I must not betray my lover. Go away! Never say this again, but, thank you, darling, from my heart.”

Maxwell heard the door open behind him. Still holding her daughter's hand, he rose to greet Mrs. Marshall.

“Come to us,” he said quickly. “Come and help us, dear lady. I want Jessie to marry me, and she's full of foolish ideas and says she will not. You will settle matters, won't you? You will not refuse me as a son?” He held out his other hand to her.

She crossed the room to them and stood looking at them both; at Maxwell, his eyes so brightly lit, his mouth so grimly set; at her daughter's face, tears on her lashes, her lips quivering, and her radiant smile. She trembled.

“I have nothing to say, my dear,” she answered. “It's not my

life, it's yours; but, David, David—" she laid her hand on his sleeve a moment and, trembling, shuddering almost, turned away and walked back to her room. She stood an instant on the threshold and kissed her hand to him, then, going in, shut the door behind her, and threw herself upon her bed.

"God give her strength," she whispered. "How can I quench the light in my child's eyes? But, O great Power, give her strength!"

To her the hour that passed dragged its feet over a stony road, moment by moment, and at last, feeling her resolution harden in her, she went to the door and opened it. Her blue eyes looked faded and sunk, so that they gave no light to her face.

Crossing the lintel, she advanced a step towards those two whom she had left together. Maxwell sat by her daughter, holding one of her hands. They were talking—were they laughing, too?

"Jessie," she said. Her voice came to them like a draught of cold air.

Maxwell stood up, and Mrs. Marshall's eyes, looking into his, saw what lay deep in them—"You come too late." She took some steps towards her child and sank on her knees beside her.

"Mother, mother," the slender figure, exerting its strength, dragged itself upright. "Just say 'Bless you' to him. David is to have his way, mother, and I'm going to be happy for a few months, just a few months, mother—need you grudge me that?"

Mrs. Marshall buried her face in her daughter's lap and tried to check her sobs.

She felt Maxwell's arms about her. Picking her up like a child, he carried her back to her own room, and, laying her on her bed, kissed her cheek. Then he went back to her daughter.

"Let her rest, Jessie, dear," he said. "I'll go, and she will come to you soon and put you to bed; high time, too." He gathered up his coat and hat, and, coming to her sofa, leaned over and kissed her hands. "Good-bye," he said; "I'll come early to-morrow."

She assented in silence, and, lying back on her pillow, touched her fingers to her lips in farewell.

Maxwell turned at the door and waved his hand, then let himself out and, going down the dark stairs, took his way home.

In the two weeks that followed, it seemed to Maxwell that he was listening to a very exquisite air, played by a cunning fiddler, played on his own heartstrings. Jessie would not move from the room in which they lived, nor choose a day for their marriage; but let him take the other room on that floor, which gave her mother some ease and comfort, let him bring a piano into her sitting-room and arrange with a young musician to play for her, let him fill the room with

flowers and have meals brought to her mother and herself from a near-by restaurant.

She was so full of her old charming gayety, so wonderfully recovered by her happiness, that he could not deny the perfection of his success; but it was bought at a price—a price so heavy that his spirit fainted within him.

He knew now all the truth,—knew that he had never loved her, never would love her; that his passion in the past had been an infatuation, the outcome of her beauty, her recklessness which so suited his humor then, and her unhappiness with her husband. He seemed to have lost count of time, it went so slowly. Half-way through the day he wondered when the week would end and found it just begun, and so the time dragged by, and it was now a fortnight since he had laid his sacrifice upon the altar.

It was the beginning of May, and, having dined alone, for they had hardly room for him, he walked to the house, mounted the long flights, and knocked. He heard the usual gay permission to enter in that hoarsely sweet voice of hers, and, obeying, saw her lying smiling at him, her eyes great and black and full of light. She had achieved a kind of recapture of her beauty, notwithstanding her thin white face, and to-night spots of red burned in her cheeks.

"David!" she cried, "I am going to be perfectly happy for two long hours, think of it! Wershaw is coming in a moment to play to us three beautiful things. I have chosen them, and you will sit by me and mother, too, and then he will go away and she will slip off to leave us alone, and I will put my arms about you for once, dear, and tell you how I love you. There! Isn't that enough for one woman!"

Maxwell was picking out violets from a bowl at her elbow and fixing them in his coat. He raised his eyebrows with a smile.

"It depends on the woman," he said.

She shook her head: "Not a bit of it. We are all alike. A room with flowers in it, some music, the man we love—the worst and the best of us are in heaven."

Maxwell looked at her a moment, with something of mingled tenderness and wonder: "Don't they care what the man feels," he thought, "the worst of them and the best of them?"

Then he heard a light knock at the door, and, rising, opened it and let the musician in.

He was a short, stoutly built lad of twenty-one, with smooth, thick black hair and an impassive face. He crossed the room to Jessie, made her a deep bow, another to Mrs. Marshall (who had entered as he entered) and, getting on the piano-stool with alacrity, looked over his shoulder at the younger woman.

"You want Brahms first," he said, "then the Tschaikowski, and then the Beethoven. It is a great effort the last, you will forgive many mistakes—*bien des fautes*."

Jessie nodded. "I want that great wide peace, and then the struggle following, on the wings of which something goes out of the world."

He bowed, and, turning to his piano, played.

Maxwell, listening, rested his elbow on the table and covered his eyes with his hand. He was afraid the music would tear away his veil. He suffered so! Music was the solvent in which he found himself reduced to his elements. While he listened to music his sensations were raised to their highest, reduced to their simplest. Listening to these harmonies he felt that by this last act of his the pack of his sins had rolled from him; but the future—ah, the future! Children he was to have none; a wife—hardly; a home—created by a woman he did not love. He did not cheat himself with those words of Mrs. Marshall's—not long since heard; he saw what happiness had done for Jessie—it would not be months, but years, and, even were they few, they would have marked him, stamped him forever. The essential vigor of him, the leaping vitality that had been his distinguishing characteristic, he was to mate with what would destroy it at its root and, reducing it to its own lower level, force it to adopt its own point of view. His horizon was to be bounded by a sick room—ah! He heard the music shiver to its end, and felt a touch. True to his bond, he drew his hand away from his eyes and faced her with a smile. He was startled at the look he met,—such tenderness, yes, but such quiet despair.

He did not understand. He leaned towards her with a solicitous question on his lips. The music stopped; she gave him a sudden brilliant smile and turned away to rest her cheek against the pillow. The young musician was playing Tschaikowski.

Maxwell leaned back and tried not to listen, and when the Beethoven was over, there followed a long deep silence.

Jessie drew a breath which seemed to shudder slowly through her lips.

Wershaw turned on the stool, met her eyes, and, receiving his acknowledgment in them, rose, quite satisfied, and, bowing, turned to depart.

Maxwell took him down the stairs, thanked him, made another engagement and then, slowly mounting, went back to the woman waited for him.

Sitting down beside her, he wondered idly what had brought such a spot of bright color to her face, then saw her scarlet lips were dry,

and that she moistened them with little sips of water from the glass at her elbow.

"Are you feverish, Jess?" he said; "do you feel too warm? The room is hot with these lamps."

She shook her head. "I like the light," she said. "Light is life, isn't it? I like floods of it. David, I want you to read something." She pointed to a book at her elbow.

He picked it up. It was Whitman, and, opening at random, he read the title of a verse: "The Song of the Open Road." Shall I read you that?" he asked. The mere words thrilled him, but as suddenly he felt how the contrast of her imprisonment must hurt her. He colored slightly at his own stupidity, and, passing on, read a few lines from another poem.

Jessie shook her head, and, turning the leaves while he held the heavy volume for her, put her slender finger on a page. "Read that," she said.

"To One Shortly to Die," began Maxwell, slowly. A pang of pity for the delicate creature beside him went through him, but he read on. It was more bitter still to stop, and as he read felt the lift of the words, the exaltation of the faith in them, and ending, "I do not commiserate, I congratulate you," his eyes fell on Jessie's face. It was so wonderfully lit that it was transformed. The slender Mænad he had known, an untamed creature built of senses only, was informed with a soul.

She turned to him, her lips quivering. "David," she said, "I want to acknowledge all my debt to you to-night. You have no conception of the gift that you have given me. Lying here all these years, courage has taught me patience, a horrible unwilling patience, living in a world governed by mischance. Can you think what it might be to have the screws of your rack unloosened, to look up and see again the face of God."

Maxwell covered his face.

She laid her hand upon his arm.

"You've built a little fire of faith in me, David," she said; "it will consume my body and release my spirit."

Maxwell, struck by her words, looked up at her. He thought she did not know what she had said. Why should it consume her body?—it would give it life also. Thank God for it! How had he ever hesitated? What had he suffered? His compensation was so unspeakably beyond his deserts.

"Little Jessie," he said, and touched her hands tenderly. She stretched out her arms, Maxwell slipped down on his knee beside her, and she clasped them about his neck. They kissed each other. She

pressed him closely, then gently freed him. Lying back on her pillow, she closed her eyes.

Maxwell stayed beside her for a moment, and, opening her eyes, she saw him still kneeling beside her, and smiled.

"You must go now," she said. "That was good-bye, darling." She smiled again, but her lips had grown very white.

Maxwell stooped and again their lips met. Then he rose and, going to the door, took up his hat and coat.

"Till to-morrow," he said. "Shall I call your mother, dear?"

She shook her head and touched her fingers to her lips.

He turned in the door, waved his hand in answer, and left her.

She lay quite still for a moment, then, feeling slowly, wearily under her pillow, drew out a box, and took from it a tablet, moistened it in the water, and, swallowing it, took a long drink from the glass and set it down empty. Then lying back on her pillow, she called quite loudly: "Mother!"

No one came.

She had grown very white, the red spots in her cheeks quite gone. "Mother!" The hoarse voice sounded like a cry of fear.

The door opened; Mrs. Marshall fled across the room, and, slipping down by the sofa, caught her child's hands.

"Love," she cried, "what is it? Are you ill?"

Jessie's face softened. The fear left her lips and eyes. She shook her head. "I was afraid you would not come in time," she said. "I only have a moment, dearest, dearest. Don't tell David, but I have taken something. Mother! I'll die in a moment, quietly, without pain. Be sure, dearest, that David never knows. Kiss me, quickly. It's coming. I couldn't be a burden on his life, and yet, mother, I hadn't strength to say no. Good-bye. Be happy thinking how happy I have been before I died, and I'm not without hope, either, dear. I believe in God again. Do not commiserate me, congratulate me."

The last words came in a murmur; she writhed as in a sort of pressure, gave a low cry, and lay still.

Mrs. Marshall had clasped her arms about her; her head rested on her child's breast over her heart. She heard the beats slacken, then stop. She lay a long time listening to the silence, then fainted into peace.

Maxwell walked far that night before he went to bed, and only turned into his room when a filtering of chilly rain began to drizzle from the skies. He tossed restlessly for hours, but finally fell into a deep sleep. It was morning when he waked suddenly, to become aware

that there was a persistent knocking at his door. He got up, and, opening it, received drowsily the telegram that was put into his hands:

"Jessie died last night. Will you come to me?"

"ELLEN MARSHALL."

He read it over two or three times and then began his hurried, stupefied dressing. Even the shock of cold water did not clear his head, and he got into his clothes only half aware of what he was putting on. Fifteen minutes later he found himself on a car in the thin blue serge suit he had worn the day before, with no overcoat and no umbrella, and yet the rain fell in a sullen, steady downpour. He had not far to walk, and covered the short block swiftly, and, standing in the vestibule of the old, dingy house, rang the bell. The maid watched him with that same approval he had before inspired, as he mounted the stairs. He looked, as she hoped he might, badly hit. There were people who minded other people's dying, then. That was a comfort, to be sure, and she went about her work.

Maxwell's hand hesitated at the knob; then, turning it without knocking, he went in. Closing the door, he stood with his back against it, and his eyes sought the sofa. She was not lying there. A certain horror eased away from his heart. Where she had always thrown him those gay welcomes she would not lie like an image. He felt rather than saw that Mrs. Marshall sat at the little table in the window bending over something she was writing. It was very early and there was little light.

She heard him and, dropping her pen, turned in her chair; and Maxwell, crossing to her, put his arm about her as she rose to meet him.

They stood thus a moment; then she gently drew away, and pointed to a chair beside her. He sat down, his restless eyes seeking the door into the other room. There was silence.

Then Maxwell, leaning his arm on the table near him, looked at her.

"When?" he said.

"Shortly after—your going," she answered.

Maxwell gave a low groan. The word brought the lines again to him "I do not commiserate, I congratulate you." He murmured them under his breath, and Mrs. Marshall caught them.

"Jessie said that," she whispered; "what is it?"

His question overleaped hers: "She knew, then?"

Mrs. Marshall drew back and covered her eyes. "Be sure David does not know"—the words went over in her brain. "Yes," she answered, "she knew she must die——"

Maxwell had always been physically attuned to her from the first hour of their meeting: they had understood each other's half-spoken thoughts. Some vibration from her brain reached his, and an idea formed inside of him. He felt his mind recoil. A question sprang to his lips. Then he realized what that question might suggest of new pain if his thought was not justified. He stumbled about mentally for some words less abrupt.

"She suffered?" he asked.

Mrs. Marshall grew very white. "Hardly at all," she said. "It was very quick."

"She sent me a message?" went on Maxwell.

"Not exactly," the frail, slender little woman steadied herself by resting her arms in their worn black on the table; "but she said she had been so happy, David."

Maxwell felt his heart sinking, sinking; he must know. He touched her arm.

"Tell me all," he said, "all—all. She—she was not glad to go—she did not—" he paused, and their eyes met. Mrs. Marshall made a supreme effort.

"Glad?" she said. "No. With her new happiness filling her heart, no; but it came so quickly, quietly, and she was physically very weary, David, dear, and could not struggle to remain." Her eyes and his eyes met full; she threw the cloak of her will about her, and, wrapped in it, he learned only what Jessie had chosen he should know.

V.

On a warm day in mid June Maxwell loitered along a roadside, astride a horse, his fortunes following an unaccustomed lead. He had dragged himself through May, working mechanically at the office, indifferent for the time what became of him. Suddenly feeling his strength go from him, his energy sapped, his heart pulseless, he had had a vision of two months of his boyhood spent in idleness on horseback sauntering along country roads—alone.

He wound things up, left the odds and ends in Dixon's hands, and choosing with care and solicitude his horse, the only companion of his journey, he quitted civilization as the city represented it, and made his way to the solitary places that mankind seldom seeks.

June was almost over, but he was mending fast; he felt vigorous physically, quiescent mentally, and as though morally he had been purged. The long warm days in the sunshine, the wonderful twilights, the blessed nights—he was wrapped about with the peace of it. He hardly thought. He felt the tide of life and strength set in on the flood again, and was happy to try his muscles and feel them respond—

to depend on his own spirits and feel them rise. The past was behind him—quite, quite done; he might turn a new page. It was required that you must suffer to expunge your sins; well, he had done so, and, if he was ever again to be a creature worth acceptance, he must forget. So he took his way and gained a sunburnt health, on the back of the gentle yet spirited animal which accompanied him.

The little village he had at last arrived at, he was loath to leave. Entering it at twilight the night before, he had fallen in love with its peace and venerable beauty and had even found tolerable quarters at the small way-house.

It was noon; he had explored a neighboring wood and was taking his way back to give his horse dinner, when he drew rein beside a hedge of roses. It grew stout and green and flung its flowers in the face of the passer-by. Just such a thing it seemed to Maxwell he had never seen, and, drawing his horse close to it, he leaned over and inhaled the perfume, then let his eyes travel over the garden from the sight of which the height of the hedge excluded the ordinary traveller.

It was filled with flowers, roses most of them, blooming in such profusion that no tending or picking could hold them in check, and they littered the walks with their fallen petals and filled the sunshine with their triumphant bloom.

One gardener was at this moment at work. A slender figure of a girl bent over a bush, clipping the flowers into a basket she carried, and Maxwell's eyes came to a full stop as they reached the shining braids of hair that glowed golden in the sun.

She straightened her lithe form, impelled by our usual instinct that warns us of a foreign presence watching us, and, turning, looked up at him.

Her eyes were limpid, lustrous, with an expression that resembled nothing he had ever seen, in serenity and peace; beneath them glowed her young joyous mouth. Maxwell knew that only once in a hundred years could such a creature exist. To go by, to pass her as one might a flower,—it could not be done. He had an impulse and obeyed it with his usual unthinking promptitude. Holding his horse close to the hedge he raised his hat.

"How do you do?" he said, and his unfaltering voice reached her plainly.

A startled color brightened her cheek, but she was too carefully bred not to answer such a greeting.

"How d'you do?" she answered, and even took a step towards him.

Maxwell sat hat in hand and smiled at her. "I don't believe you remember me a bit," he said. Why not be hung for a sheep? "I haven't seen you since you were a little girl. How are you all?"

She took another step towards him with a charming air of relief.

"Oh, I thought I hadn't met you lately," she said. "We are all very well! at least, I am and Aunt Flora is, but papa is abroad, you know, taking the cure at N——, and Ned is with him."

Maxwell nodded gravely. "I am glad of that," he said.

She looked a little puzzled, and he added: "It would have been lonely for him to go alone, don't you think?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose it would," she assented; "but I'm rather lonely without them both. No one but Aunt Flora, you see, and she never goes off the place, she is so crippled with her rheumatism."

"Dear me, I'm sorry," said Maxwell, and, morally speaking, he settled in his saddle, prepared for another fence: "I wonder if she would see me if I came in and paid my respects. She would hardly remember my face," he added, smiling (had he not landed safely on the other side?); "but perhaps we might have a talk over our mutual friends,—that is, if she is up to it."

The girl was standing just the other side of the hedge now, and nodded in acquiescence.

"She'd love it," she said; "you know, of course, how deaf she is, and cut off in that way, and yet so gay and sweet, and does like people so. Do come in; she isn't down yet, but she will be delighted to see you, I'm sure."

Without more ado, Maxwell rode up to the gate and, getting off his horse, the bridle over his arm, he walked beside his hostess up the broad gravel drive towards the house. There was a stretch of lawn before them, and they sauntered slowly, following the twist of the drive.

"I should think," he began, "that you would have gone with your father?"

"I wanted to," she swung her basket, tipping the roses about, "but papa wouldn't take me. He's never gotten over Aunt Flora's unhappy marriage, and he's afraid I shall marry an adventurer like Monsieur Devinge."

Maxwell felt a sting as he looked down at the charming countenance beside him, but he had no idea of retreating now.

"But that was long ago," he remarked.

"Twenty years," she gave a shrug to her graceful shoulders; "but papa cannot forget how he hated that man, and you know I am named after Aunt Flora."

"How do you spell your name?" demanded Maxwell, abruptly. They were at the steps, and one fact he must know.

"The usual way," she returned, looking down at him as he stood below her; "F-l-o-r-a."

"But that's not all of it," he answered, smiling; "give me your full signature."

She shook her head. "I have no other name," she said; "I'm just Flora Ashby. What did you think?"

Maxwell smoothed the shining neck of his horse.

"I thought you had a family name that your father was rather proud of," he said, and had the effrontery to turn and smile into her eyes.

"No," she answered, laughing; "the point is just the other way, that I have no middle name. There have been Flora Ashby's for generations."

"I knew there was a point somewhere," retorted Maxwell, and they both laughed—wolf and lamb together, and the more he felt his falseness the more determined he was to hold his ground. Would he meet such another pair of eyes on his travels? Another such lovely smiling mouth? No, the game was worth the candle.

"I'll ring for Isaac," said Miss Ashby, which she did, and in a moment or two they stood in the drawing-room together, and, turning to leave him, the girl hesitated an instant at the door, and blushed.

"It seems absurd," she said, "that I should have to ask your name."

"My name is David Maxwell," returned her visitor, and as she disappeared he wondered whether he had made that up too.

I'm a villian, he thought, repentantly; but, then, it's only a trifle; I *might* have known Mr. Ashby, and then how simple it would have been—I wish to the deuce I had. Sitting down he looked restlessly about him. I'm a fool, he thought, but I've grown absurdly shy of lying; and he fixed his mind on the room he sat in. It was worth looking at, and he forgot his own delinquencies as he noted its details.

Panelled in white-painted wood to the ceiling, with dark shining wood floors, a few old miniatures in velvet frames, and two beautiful portraits in oils alone broke the even decoration of the panelling. Books there were, too, a little musty in proof of their long life in the family of Ashby, and not a table or a bookcase but it was loaded with glass bowls and jars of roses. He had never seen such roses; their perfume seemed to have saturated the room like its natural scent. He felt sure it must smell of them in December.

He waited fifteen minutes and grudged none of them, but stood up as he heard the light clatter of feminine heels on the wooden stairs, crossing the hall, and so entering the room. Then he beheld, with an instant sense of satisfaction, Madame Flora Devigne.

If he had been afraid that the lady's foreign experience had bred suspicion in her, he was ashamed of the thought; she advanced with such graciousness of demeanor that Maxwell lost whatever remained of his heart not already in the possession of an Ashby.

"My niece tells me you know my brother," said Madame Devigne, holding out her long, slender hand; "I make you welcome to Ashby."

It was too late to repent, and Maxwell steadied his somewhat stammering tongue.

"I am afraid I am an intruder," he said; "but I wanted so much to enter your gates that I have presumed."

She hardly caught the words, and, sitting down, made him draw a chair near her, and began to talk to him of a thousand things, the clues to which he could but seldom catch; but as they progressed, he talked also of people he thought her likely to know among his acquaintances, and they reached a field of common ground with mutual satisfaction.

Her finely bred features grew animated, her clear eyes sparkled, and Maxwell succumbed to a personal charm that made him quite forget in half an hour that they had never met before that morning.

He stayed to luncheon, and gave Madame Flora his arm in the garden for a stroll afterwards. When she went up slowly and laboriously to her afternoon rest, he stood at the foot of the stairs, looking after her, and regretted that he did not feel quite intimate enough to ask her to take him as a prop to her room door. As he stood there, the girl came lightly down and joined him.

He looked at her.

"Must I go?" he asked

She leaned against the newel-post, her eyes lowered. "I'm not busy," she said, "except that I must pick roses."

"Must you?" returned Maxwell; "may I pick them too?"

"Will you?" She raised her eyes and opened them rather wide: "Won't it be a bore?"

"I don't think it will," he answered slowly, his eyes still on her face; "I'd like to try, but I stipulate for a basket too."

She laughed gayly: "A basket! You shall have a dozen and fill them all, if you like;" and he took her at her word.

It was two weeks since Maxwell had first come to the gates of Ashby, and he was still living in the village hard by. Every day he rode or drove or spent some part of the afternoon with its younger mistress, and almost every evening he played chess with Madame Devigne. They had three games; then she took her novel and an English paper and settled herself in her corner by the lamp, leaving Maxwell to be entertained for an hour by her niece. It was warm, not too warm for the older lady, but their more impatient spirits sometimes carried them out into the garden and always kept them

in the great wide open window hanging out into the cooler night outside.

Maxwell was living in a kind of dream. He made no calculations, looked no further ahead than the morrow, and felt himself more perilously happy than he had ever been in his life before. His false entry into this rapid intimacy troubled him at times, but he put it from him. It surely was too small a thing to drive him utterly from their good graces when the time came that he should tell them, and till then he would persevere.

"Do you see that little house by the road-side?" asked Miss Ashby. She and Maxwell were riding together down the dusty high-road.

"My eyesight is excellent and the house not ten yards from me," returned Maxwell, severely; "but you mean that you want to stop there. Now, don't sacrifice our ride to calls, I beg of you——"

"How men hate civility!" she smiled at him gayly; "but I only mean to stop a moment and ask Cousin Sarah to take tea to-night." She drew rein and slid off her horse before Maxwell could reach her. Handing him the bridle, she mounted the steps and rang the bell. It had hardly sounded before the door opened and their hostess, it appeared, was upon them. No, a younger woman, before whom Miss Ashby drew back, but who caught her hand, kissed her, and greeted Maxwell all in a breath.

"Dear Mr. Maxwell," was the form the last performance took, "where did you drop from? I didn't know you and Flora were friends."

Maxwell bowed. "I am surprised to hear there is anything you are unaware of," he retorted.

The girl laughed.

"Oh, well, no one expects to keep up with your intimacies," she returned; "I left several women in town raging because you had left no address behind you. How well you look! Telford seems to agree with you. Have you been here long?"

"Came this morning," said Maxwell.

"Did you really?" She opened her eyes and turned to Miss Ashby. "Did he really, Flora?"

"Of course not," Miss Ashby laughed, impatiently. "Tell Cousin Sarah we can't wait, but we expect her to supper at eight." She went down the steps, and, as Maxwell helped her to mount, she added, "When did you come?"

"Just this morning."

Miss Warren looked them both over: "You two look delightful, but don't have too good a time, remember, Flora."

They rode away down the long avenue of elms that bordered the

dusty road and on in silence through the country. It took two miles of this and two miles more of woodland shade, with a word now and then, to drive Miss Warren from their minds, but it was done at last.

"There is nothing like it, is there?" said the girl, and turned the lovely oval of her face to his.

"Nothing like what?" returned the man. "Nothing like riding with you? I'll agree there."

She colored a little. "According to Miss Warren, you are a judge," she returned, and gave him a look, half wistful, half provocative.

Maxwell nodded: "First-rate judge," he answered, gravely. "I speak from experience. There is nothing like it. It's a spell. I incline to think it's the roses," he added, smiling.

She looked ahead of her, opened her lips as though to speak, but stopped, and Maxwell went on.

"You see you are never without one," he pointed to a flower she had pinned in her dress. "Who ever put a rose in a habit! But they are your power! you would die if you hadn't one on, or turn into a bird and fly away. If I could see you without a rose, I suppose you would look like an ordinary girl; as it is—" his horse walked slowly beside hers; he leaned towards her; "as it is—" their eyes met; "I am afraid to speak," ended Maxwell, slowly.

"Don't," she said, very low; and they rode on in silence. The wood closed in about them; there was just room for them to ride side by side. Maxwell drew rein.

"Let us stop a moment," he said; "what haste is there? I am completely happy; you are, outwardly at least, content. Life doesn't give one so many such moments that we can afford to lose them."

They stood still, the horses catching at each other's bridles.

"I have talked a great deal about myself in the days we have been together," Maxwell went on, "and tried to make you believe that I was on the high-road to being a good man; but one sin hangs heavy on my soul. I shan't tell you what it is yet, but it pulls me down from heaven. This does not seem to you to look like heaven, perhaps, this green wood where you are alone with me, but to me it is the place."

The girl sat still on her horse and let him nibble the grass.

"Let us sit here awhile in this garden of ferns," went on Maxwell; and, getting off his horse, he tethered him to a tree and stood ready to dismount her. She slid down, hardly touching his hand, and, while he fastened her horse, she walked a few steps into the mass of ferns. Choosing a spot where she would not crush them, she sat down. Maxwell stretched himself out beside her and they remained a moment in silence.

"What did Miss Warren mean by telling you not to enjoy yourself too much?" he asked, resting his cheek on his hand and looking up at her.

She picked three little ferns and spread them like a fan, and crimsoned slowly under his watching eyes. The sunlight, which made her hair pure gold, her white skin opalescent, her green eyes translucent jewels, as plainly showed the warm red color that welled up in her throat and cheek. She spoke at last.

"She, like many other people, thinks I am engaged to Ned." She still looked at her ferns.

"She does, does she?" said the man, slowly—"to Ned, what Ned?"

"Why there is only one possible Ned;" the girl turned to him, the color fading on her cheek to its usual delicate tint, "to Ned Funstun."

"I see," returned Maxwell. His expression had changed. She tried to read it. "I see; and what does Ned think?"

Her eyes dropped again: "Oh, he—he thinks I will be."

"Ah!" He sat up and crossed his arms closely on his chest: "And you, what do you think?"

She turned her clear gaze on him, and the bright color flashed again into her face.

"I don't think; I know," she answered, and Maxwell's arms tightened. He remained speechless.

She gathered a fresh set of ferns and proceeded more slowly: "I have known him, you know, since we were children," she began; but Maxwell interrupted her.

"I don't know, I know nothing," he interjected, hoarsely; and she gave him a wondering look.

"To have known papa and not known he intended I should marry my cousin! Why, that's to have accomplished a feat."

Maxwell's lips looked fine and without kindness. "I did not know your father," he said.

She dropped her ferns into her lap and looked at him.

"I am hoist with my own petard," he went on; "that's all. You don't understand, do you? you innocent and truth-speaking creature. Well, you shall have it—the truth at last. When I looked over the hedge at you that morning," he stopped a moment, his light eyes curiously hot in the cold setting of his face, "that morning,—one year ago, is it, since I first saw you,—I had an impulse to speak to you; I did so; you answered—it was only the first step that cost, and you know the ending—I had never seen you—your father—Ashby."

She had been gazing straight into his eyes, her lips parted to let the quick breath come through; now she turned and set her trembling

lower lip against the other. Maxwell watched her. Some words dropped from him like thoughts:

"I did it without thought—I *might* have known you—I felt I must enter your garden, and I meant no wrong. Pah! I lied—that's all; much good it has done me!"

He turned from her and sat motionless. There was no sound but the horses' bits jingling as they cropped the grass. Still looking ahead of him, he spoke.

"You mind so much," he said.

The girl's hands were clasped tightly in her lap. "So much," she said; and again there was silence.

Maxwell felt a hideous tide of loneliness sweep over him. All the companionship of these two weeks, such human intercourse as he had never known, all this receded from his reach. Intimacy of his heart and mind, of his secretive mind that wanted no one to know its paths, his heart, hidden under habits, sins, failings, such an intimacy as he would never have again; this was to fail him. He was already far from her; she who loved another man felt far from him and his lies. Ah, he had thought it would not be difficult to drop his past like a pack and go onward unencumbered! His bitterness was for the moment like vitriol and ate into him; then of a sudden its gnawing ceased. If she had condoned it without a word, would he have wanted that? Did he want her to be like himself? He turned sharply and spoke out his feeling:

"I am glad you mind," he said; "make me suffer; go on." Their eyes met; he put out his hand and touched her dress. "Do I look different to you?" he said.

Her eyes did not falter. "Quite different," she said.

His pain swept in on him again. A sudden unaccustomed red darkened his cheek. "So you despise me and love another man," he went on; "I think it is time for me to go, don't you? Shall I get the horses?" His eyes met hers with a savage lift of the eyebrow.

She sat quite still and grave. "The horses?" she said; "what do you mean?"

"Mean," returned the man, harshly; "why, that I'm of that variety of beast that prefers to nurse its wounds in its den alone; so come." He rose and stood before her, looking down into the bright shining of her eyes. She held out her hand; he caught it, and, feeling her pulling him gently down, dropped on one knee on the grass beside her.

"You'll never do it again, will you?" said the girl, and her lovely red lip trembled.

He stared at her speechless.

"I know you won't," she went on, "but don't let us talk of it any more, shall we? And let us be just as we were before this afternoon." She had left her hand in his, and as she spoke, looked into his eyes; she could not endure their gaze, and her lids drooped.

"But Ned?" said Maxwell, hoarsely.

She sprang lightly to her feet, and, as he stood up beside her, gave a strange joyous smile.

"Oh, Ned," she said; "I had forgotten Ned; can't you?" She had reached the horses first, but Maxwell caught her hand as it lay on the bridle.

"Wait!" he said, huskily; "let me say this—I——"

She laid her hand lightly on his lips. "Say nothing," she said; "I know everything or I shall know it. We have time—all the time in the world before us, haven't we?" Again her eyes dropped before his, and she went on: "This is my day. Do what I tell you. Come!"

She mounted and, looking down at him, moved away down the path, and, as she did so, touched her fingers to her lips: "It is my day, and the watchword is—" She halted, and Maxwell rode after her, and, reaching her, caught her bridle.

"My love," he said; and she rode on without denial.



WORLDLY THOUGHTS OF A WORLDLING

Really to enter into the fulness of Tomorrow, one must use the key of Yesterday.

The milk of human kindness is never more diluted than when gossips are at the pump.

The worm is not to be blamed for turning,—especially when a girl tries to bait a hook with him.

"First thoughts are best," says Conscience. "Last thoughts are best," says Prudence. Both are right.

The source of cynicism is either the liver or the heart, according as the cynic is a he or a she.

It may take two to make a quarrel, but many a row has been begun solely because one "friend" played "promoter."

Modern progress can accomplish most things, but it never will be able to substitute an elevator for the ladder of fame. WARWICK JAMES PRICE.

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF JEAN INGELOW, THE HOME-POET

By G. B. Stuart



A FEW years ago, I stood by the grave of Jean Ingelow, and realized that she and her work had been part of my life for thirty years; vivid impressions of childhood and youth, in which great things and small jostled, came crowding back from the far-off sixties and seventies, and I thought that perhaps some of her readers, who hadn't known her face to face, might like to read a girl's impressions of her during the most fruitful period of her literary life. To these years belong her first two books of Poems; two delightful collections of Stories, which this generation would do well to look up in old book shelves, and her first novel, fantastic and charming, "Off the Skelligs."

For about twelve or fourteen years of this time Jean Ingelow was a very familiar figure in our home-circle, a staunch friend of our parents and ourselves. My father and Miss Ingelow's eldest brother had been acquainted in business for years but it was in August, 1865, that my father first met the young writer, whose poems had been very favorably received in England and America a few months before.

Mother and we children were from home, at the seaside, at the time, and our father, who had stayed behind in London, thus wrote to my mother of the meeting (the Ingelows had lately come to Kensington):

"Last night I dined with the Ingelows, and had the honour of escorting the poetess to table. She is a fresh-faced, pleasant-mannered young woman, who blushes furiously when you address her, and is manifestly afraid that you will try to draw her out on literary matters! What did we talk about? Why, about the relative prices of butchers' meat in town and country! I noticed she had an excellent appetite, and ate everything as if she enjoyed it! After dinner, when Miss Jean was not listening, her mother told me that she was almost adored by Americans; who came in shoals just to see and shake hands

with her,—‘Jane,’ as they call her at home, in their matter-of-fact way.”

My mother read out this letter to us, as she had previously read us many of Miss Ingelow’s poems, and the picture of the blushing young lady, dressed in black silk (we learnt afterwards), has remained in my mind ever since. We made many inquiries of our father about the poetess’s home in Kensington, where Mrs. Ingelow, a widow, and her sons lived, with Miss Jean. Afterwards, I knew the prim little house well, with its squeezey old-fashioned rooms and strip of walled garden at the back, in which I got my first glimpse of literary society.



Literary society was, in those days, more a thing apart than it is in England to-day; we lived out beyond Harrow, some fifteen miles from town at that time, and my sisters and I were not in the habit of going much into London society. So Mrs. and Miss Ingelow’s afternoon parties became an event in our lives, recurring as they did every summer for a good many years, during which period we grew up one after another and became eligible for this intellectual treat. I was only fifteen when Miss Ingelow specially named me in one of her invitations and added: “Bring her, and she shall have a special introduction.” It was to “Hans Breitmann,” whom she instructed to “get me tea and talk to me and see I enjoyed myself;” I remember how proud I felt walking up and down the strip of Kensington garden with the Lion of the hour, and if I shut my eyes, I can to this moment see a pair of very bright primrose gloves, sewn with black, which my mother had carefully warned me not to put on to travel up by train, and into which I had only just struggled as we reached the Ingelows’ door! I wish I could recall as clearly all that Mr. Leland said about modern poetry, but when I think I have captured a recollection, the yellow gloves start up between, and obliterate it! But I know I had an enchanting afternoon, thanks to the kindness of the hostess who planned my entertainment and the guest who abetted her in it.

But this is hurrying on too fast, for it was while we girls were still children that Miss Ingelow became a constant visitor at our country home, and learnt to know us all apart (though we were a crowd of five sisters), and to interest herself in all our respective joys and sorrows, plans and projects, aims and ambitions.

One word here, in passing, about Mrs. Ingelow. She was a very striking old lady,—indeed, her personality always impressed me far more than her daughter’s. She had a roughly-hewn—almost

masculine face, an incisive voice, and the most delightful smile in the world! She was a trifle prim, but this was tempered by a keen sense of humour—she told a funny story inimitably. I remember one, which delighted my father, and which became a byword in our family.

"Yes, my children are very good children and they never forget my birthday," (Mrs. Ingelow *loquitur*). "It was just the other day, and they gave me a very beautiful and handsome silver tray, Jane and her two brothers joining together to give it me. It was very gratifying to me that they should remember the anniversary; unfortunately they do not remember the bill for the tray, which came in to me to be paid this morning!" To this day any gift with a penalty attached passes among us as "Mrs. Ingelow's tray."

She always wore a Quakerish cap tied under her chin, and a folded kerchief of frilled book-muslin across her black dress; her maid made these for her, and they were always fresh and crisp. One day, I was sitting beside her when the maid brought in several fresh *fichus*, and a lapful of muslin pieces, odds and ends of frilling, etc. Mrs. Ingelow took all the "shapings," as she called them,—some half-yards of fine muslin and plaited frills,—fastened them together with a pin, wrapped them in paper and presented them to me. "They are all nice and good pieces," she said, "and a young girl like you may find some pretty use for them!" I often think of this kind little attention from an old lady, of whom many people stood in great awe, and who was reckoned something of a critic and a martinet.



Another reminiscence of Mrs. Ingelow comes back to me as I write. I hear her incisive, rather pedantic voice laying down the law to my mother: "Girls talk now (somewhere about the year 1869, it must have been) on subjects which in my young days they would have died sooner than have mentioned! I can assure you, my dear Mrs. S——, that if this goes on women will lose every atom of their influence over men; and then the ruin of society is inevitable!" I could not think at the time to what terrible subject she alluded, but the increasing freedom of speech, especially among girls, which has marked the last twenty years often reminds me of this stricture of a very wise old lady, on modern decadence.

Jean Ingelow came every summer to stay with us at Harrow Weald, and her visit always included certain special features. Of course there was a dinner party, when the intellectual *élite* of a country place was mustered to meet the authoress; there was always

an excursion into the woods or fields in search of wild flowers for the Great Ormonde Street Hospital for Children, in which she was interested; and there was a home evening of a particular character. I am not sure that the dinner parties were rendered particularly brilliant by Miss Ingelow's efforts,—she did not shine in what was, in those days, essentially "company." A literary dignitary of the church, invited to meet her, complained ruefully that she talked to him half dinner time about soup-kitchens and then changed the subject, with the removal of the cloth (we removed the cloth in the sixties!) to Clothing Clubs.

I fancy she had a perfect horror of appearing to pose as a literary character,—especially as a poetess. There was still an idea afloat that a poetess *must* be a sentimental person of the L. E. L. School, falling into attitudes, and crying "La!" when observed, or thinking herself so. Jean Ingelow's robust common sense revolted from this, and almost caused her to err on the side of over-doing the commonplace. She was indisputably an authority on certain points which twenty years ago were less universally understood than they now are and she might with dignity and general approval have "taken upon herself" in this connection more than she did. It was only when talking *a deux*, with my mother, perhaps, or some other intimate friend, that she ever to my knowledge put forward a definite personal opinion on things literary. I remember a very animated discussion about "Stuart of Dunleath," the Hon. Mrs. Norton's novel, which my mother admired, and prevailed on Jean Ingelow to read. She denounced it as unreal, meretricious and mischievous, and said, severely, that it showed all the worst traits of its authoress, who was of course airing her own grievances in its pages. My mother, who was enthusiastic and romantic, was deeply disappointed. We girls had not then read the novel in question, which was considered particularly "advanced" and possibly "dangerous." When I did so, some years later, oddly enough I agreed with both ladies: I saw all the pretentiousness that disgusted Jean Ingelow, and all the charm of romance which fascinated my mother; and no book could have offered me a clearer comment on the character of both!



Those summer dinner parties to which I have alluded as functions of our "poetess programme," included some noted guests whose names come back to my memory in connection with the Ingelows: Bishop McDougall,—the "fighting bishop," whose brush with the Malays nearly cost him his apron; Mr. (afterwards Bishop) Wordsworth, a

very delightful talker, but with so shy a manner that my father used to complain "he always puts his head under the table to say his best things;" the Edwyn Vaughans from Harrow; Matthew Arnold, Dr. Pole, who played whist after dinner to the terror of the few, or played the piano instead to the delight of the many; Sir Thomas Wade and Mr. William Mercer, old China friends of my parents; Mr. Haweis, a young man full of Garibaldian enthusiasm; Mrs. Siddons, representing the drama very gracefully, as she did everything; and Mrs. Rundle Charles, the serious novelist. These two ladies looked their respective parts better than did Miss Ingelow, who always seemed to us determined to ignore the attributes of her special rôle with intention.

I have elsewhere told the following story, but it is so characteristic that I must tell it again. One evening at dinner Miss Ingelow confessed that though she had often written poems about nightingales, she had never heard one sing. Everyone commented on this as extraordinary, and we agreed that a poetess's imagination was a marvellous gift, but we determined that not another night should pass without remedying this grievous omission. It was in May, and about nine o'clock we led forth Miss Ingelow to the lime avenue, where the nightingales were singing in scores,—we all held our breath to listen as one after another, far and near, broke into song. Presently Miss Ingelow asked, anxiously: "Well, are they singing yet? I don't hear anything!" It transpired that being a Londoner, and uncertain of unknown shrubberies on a chilly spring evening, she had defied draughts by the simple expedient of putting cotton-wool in her ears before venturing out!—at least she said it was on account of draughts, but I thought at the time, and still think, that her determination to be betrayed into nothing that could savour of sentimentalism had something to do with it! However, she never minded being chaffed about it, and enjoyed the joke as much as any of us.

Her sense of fun was pleasant and ready, but particularly simple. I remember a piece over which she "laughed consumedly." One of her brothers was balloon-struck and made ascents, unknown to his family, with the celebrated Mr. (or was he Capt.?) Glaisher. The papers said next day the well-known aeronaut was accompanied by a "Mr. I." His sister telling the story observed: "Mr. I. was no mystery to us!" and delightedly repeated what was certainly an exceedingly neat quip. Perhaps I may mention here that kind "Mr. I." afterwards insured his life on behalf of some orphan nephews and nieces,—then, without a murmur, give up the ballooning which he loved, on the instance of the insurance office.



I have mentioned a special entertainment of those home evenings which Miss Ingelow spent with us, and which honestly I believe she enjoyed more than the company occasions. We had a habit of chronicling family affairs in verse, and whenever she came to stay, the poetess insisted on having these read to her,—not one or two picked out, but everything we had written, since the last time she had seen us! These verses were valentines, rhyming “logs” of visits or excursions, letters in doggerel when we stayed away from home; to all of which Miss Ingelow used to listen with the greatest delight, often begging for one or other to be read over again! She used to ejaculate: “How funny!” “How clever!” “What a splendid rhyme!” “What good practice all this is!” all the time, and really enjoyed our nonsense as if she had never written a line herself or knew what the word “poetry” meant! I fancy one reason for this was that she took her own poetry seriously,—she had been shy over it in her girlhood and even when it was given to the world, and had become familiar in all our mouths, she did not care to discuss it. The spontaneous gayety and “go” of our home verses, with their audacious rhymes and astounding personalities, delighted her. We often played crambo, that best of all “pencil and paper” games, when she stayed with us, and I am ashamed to confess that it was Miss Ingelow who gathered up our crambo-verses to take home to show her mother, not we who cherished hers! If we had only had the wit to do so, what a precious collection of poems, unknown to the public, we might have possessed!

There was a point in Miss Ingelow’s poems which often exercised our curiosity,—her frequent allusions, in her lyrics particularly, to sailors and the sea. We wondered, with affectionate sympathy, whether she had ever known, perhaps loved, a sailor?—perhaps been engaged to someone who was lost at sea?—for how frequently the idea recurs in her writings! Once we very cautiously led up to the subject and she spoke without a moment’s hesitation: “Sailors? Why sailors touch everybody’s heart. Sailors are ready-made heroes of romance to English people, much more appealing and convincing than even soldiers!”

Once one of us, would-be witty, and alluding to a recent conversation on city affairs, ventured: “You will have to alter your songs, Miss Ingelow, if England goes on growing commercial and money-grubbing; your next edition will have,

O my stockbroker haste!
For the time runs to waste!

instead of the verse as it stands!” We were all frightened out of

our wits when this audacious speech was once spoken,—for young girls did not speak audaciously to their elders in the seventies; the Education Act was still too young! Mother looked horrified, for the parody was flagrant, and the song parodied a touching and serious one, but Miss Ingelow burst out laughing, taking the suggestion as an excellent joke, and we escaped the maternal reproof afterwards, which we were expecting.

If there were a special sailor in Miss Ingelow's life, she wore her rue with a difference from other disappointed women, and I think her family, after these long years, will forgive me hazarding the suggestion, for sake of the kind and tender memories that cling to it. Miss Ingelow used always to give us the songs which were sent her by composers in England and America, who found how excellently her lyrics "set themselves" to music. We still have "O, Fair Dove!" "When Sparrows Build," "The Frozen Mere," and "My Sailor, Make Haste!" with her name on them, just as she passed them on to us, though they are tattered with much usage. I never take them up without remembering how naïvely she used to express surprise that another and yet another of her songs had taken the popular fancy. The fact is, her lyrics are eminently singable,—they have all the qualities which "words for music" generally lack.



In personal appearance Miss Ingelow was a small woman, with a high, rather fixed, colour and a plump figure. Her manner was particularly gentle, though I have seen her fussy, through nervousness. She generally dressed in black. A square-cut black moiré dinner dress, with white lace, and lace lappets on her hair (which she took to wearing at an age which ladies of to-day would think ridiculously premature), or a cap, became her very well indeed, and was her usual "company" gown. On one occasion, about the year 1873, the then four or five most noted women writers of the day determined to meet and make each others' acquaintance, choosing a *rendezvous* in the Isle of Wight which happened at the moment to suit them all. They were Miss Yonge, Miss Parr (Holme Lee), Miss Sewell, and Miss Ingelow. I am not certain, but Miss Dinah Muloch may have been of the party. Perhaps the wittiest of the four described the meeting to me. "Well, what did you think when they all walked in?" I asked my informant. "Think? I thought that such a party of dowdy women would be hard to match all the world over, but Jean Ingelow, who was possibly the youngest of us, and who came straight from London, had managed to make herself the greatest frump of all!"

Certainly as a young woman she did not dress very tastefully, though in later years the rather elderly style she affected grew to suit her better.

Her love of wild flowers was a revelation to me who, having had the run of gardens and greenhouses all my childhood, had thought very little of field flowers till I caught their appreciation from her. Her poems are full of allusions to out-of-the-way simple flowers which one would scarcely have expected a town-living woman to have noticed. I often wonder how many of her minute observations of Nature she made in our fields and shrubberies, where I have seen her closely examining a piece of white hemlock blossom ("How lovely this would be thought, if it grew in a greenhouse!") and comparing the thick, damp, pond forget-me-not with its dry namesake of the garden border.

"What I liked almost best about our Swiss tour," I heard her say, "was to sit at Zermatt and examine all the flowers within reach in the grass; once I found twenty-seven varieties without moving from my place!"

I stood beside her grave in a London cemetery, and saw her laid to rest among her own people, beside her father and mother, and that elder brother (Mr. I.), with whom she so long had made her happy home. Her mother, an earlier Jean Ingelow, died at the age of seventy-seven, her own age also. Figures like these show the long spaces of time over which memory skips so nimbly! But to me she will always be a young woman,—young in mind and manner, and part of that young life when one has but to stretch out one's hand and gather a score of different flowers, without moving from one's place!



LIFE

BY WARWICK JAMES PRICE

A ROUND, vast plains of tawny, blistering sand;
O'erhead, vast curves of cloudless, scorching sky:—
The last survivor of a travellers' band
Lies down to die.

And yet, below the desert's yellow rim,
A spring leaps from the palms, then, tired of play,
Sinks in the sands outside its grassy brim
And wastes away.

THE SHERIFF OF CONTENTION

By Will Levington Comfort

Author of "The Fortress"



MAGOON shaved, policed himself generally, then strode up the river, his big sable-and-white collie following. He reached town after dark and found a little restaurant and a good-looking girl therein. This was Nettie, the red-haired angel of Buckamuck, which settlement was among the rawest of the "gold" towns on the Mammon. Trouble was plain in Nettie's eyes.

"Hello, Danny," she said shyly; "come on back here to the kitchen. I'm just about through. Where's Scotty?"

"Waitin' at th' dure, Nettie."

"Come in, Scotty. You're invited," the girl called. The collie nosed the screen door open and entered gravely. The three sat down in the little shiny-clean kitchen. Magoon's face was wrinkled with emotion as he said huskily:

"Ye tol' me t' come this night, Nettie. Will ye marry me, gurrl? Mind, I'll set Scotty on ye, if ye don't!"

"I did ask you to come to-night," she forced herself to say, "and I've got to give you the worst of it. It's hard to have to say 'No' to you, Danny—"

The little Irishman rubbed his hard hand across his mouth, and left a thin game smile there.

"Ah well," he said almost steadily, "'tis your swate self that knows best, deere."

The girl rose impulsively. "Believe me, Danny, I would help it if I could, but Colter has won out. I know the boys hate and misunderstand him, but he's a man for that, and I told him to-day that I was his for life; and all the time I knew that I was turning down a man who would make a little heaven for a woman here on the Mammon—for a woman that was square—and I'm meaning you, Danny!"

It was the ancient story of the woman who loves, talking to the man she likes.

"'Tis no manner av blame for ye, Nettie," Magoon declared, "an' for all I know Colter is a better man thin I am, which is

rubbin' glory in th' face av him, sure. Scotty, lad, shake hands wit' th' lady, for 'tis th' last chanet ye'll have, sor."

The collie squatted before her gloomily and raised his paw high. Then Magoon held out his hand to her.

"Good-bye, Nettie, deere," he said, "an' don't ye be afther feelin' bad for me. I have a weddin' prisint for ye, an' a wurrud or a blow or a dollar, or all three, anny time ye nade thim."

And so the little Irishman left her with the deepest hurt of his life. The next morning he turned over his claim, through a third party, to the auburn-haired girl. And there were few better claims on the Mammon than the "Belle Mare" diggings. Then with a mount and two pack-ponies, and the mournful Scotty at his left stirrup, Magoon rode north along the shrunken river-bed of the Mammon to the town of Contention, making the thirty miles from Buckamuck before sundown.

He was needed at Contention, and remained to shoot his way into prominence and respect. He was feared and admired as lucky and effective men are. He bought a new claim on the Mammon and made it pay. He took his drink and sat in a poker game on occasion. As a deputy under Sheriff Stockton he went to the Gap, a rendezvous of smutted characters, winged "Big" Fellows there and brought him back on a murder charge. The marvelous part of the case was that the outlaws at the Gap did not gainsay nor gunsay the proceeding. The psychological reason for this was too deep for Contention, but the gray-eyed little Irishman stepped up high and mysteriously in the minds of men.

Then Stockton, the sheriff, undertook to clean out the Gap, times being dull in Contention. He rode over with seven deputies and was shot from his horse as he hove in sight of the stronghold. Only life enough remained in him after he fell to turn over his command to Magoon, who carried out the job, but brought back, besides Stockton and his prisoners, three of his own seven on pack-ponies, made fast with the diamond hitch. By acclaim on his return, Danny was hoisted into Stockton's place, and the dove of peace came down from the yellow sky to peck at crumbs from the Irishman's hands, while the melancholy Scotty dozed at the feet of his king.

But the red-haired girl still held the sun and stars in the sky for Sheriff Danny Magoon. If it were possible he would have avoided hearing from the Colters, and certainly no ordinary pressure could have forced him back to Buckamuck, but still his memories were like an open and angry wound.

"Swate as an angil, she wore t' me, Scotty," he would sometimes say to the collie as they sat together at the shanty-door in

the evening-time, "but 'tis not for ye an' me t' grow tired av marrud life—eh, lad?"

Magoon had been in Contention nearly two years when the mail-carrier, whose peregrinations wired the Mammon towns together, brought word to Contention that there had been a murder down in Buckamuck. It appears that the unhallowed life of "Ocre" Vanreb had escaped through a knife-wound in the back. The fact that wildly stirred Buckamuck was that a knife, the weapon of an unclean man, had been used. The volume of suspicion pointed toward Mrs. Colter's husband, upon whom the late Vanreb had directed his last assaults of abusive humor. On the same night, later and alone, Vanreb had died.

Now Buckamuck had never relished the presence of Colter. He was no mixer and bore upon his person ear-marks of the despised East. His education would not have militated so strongly against him had he shown an inclination to become one of the boys. However, Colter's winning of Buckamuck's red-haired girl was the head and front of his offending. A lady-killer and a horse-thief lined up together in the lowest stratum of sin. The woman he had taken unto himself had been one of the settlement's few amenities; thought and spoken of as an attraction, like the gorgeous Arizona nights, the background of sharply-carved hills and the Mammon's eke of gold, which bound all men together for good and ill. No man was worthy of her, although the town had been half reconciled to the suit of Danny Magoon before the stranger came.

Moreover, Colter had salted the open wound of his presence, and his looting of the town's darling, by depriving Buckamuck of an honorable and upright citizen, with a quick and ready gun; then he rubbed it in by working the "Belle Mare" diggings which Magoon had given to the girl who had turned him down.

"Ocre" Vanreb was not greatly missed, but he had gone out hog-fashion, evidence of guilt pointing to the man whom the whole town itched to macerate. The result was that Colter would shortly swallow the hemp.

The news bore down upon Magoon, stirred into disorder all the sorrow and passion of his life, ignited the eager fuel of hope. Scotty scented big game in the manner of his master. Nancy Sykes, Magoon's Chinaboy, appeared in the doorway of the shanty when the shadows of that afternoon were long:

"Suppol leddy, Shallif," he announced.

"Ah go long wit' you. Supper is ut? Sure, an' I've had ut thin!"

As the sheriff had been sitting for more than three hours just

without the door the astonishment of the Oriental was blameless. Magoon eat! It was not in him, for his soul was running wild with spring freshets of glory plucked out of the future.

"She must hate him be this time annyway, Scotty," he reasoned, "cuttin' rascal that he is; thin sure 'tis no pinin' widder that she'll be. An' who wore th' first choice av' her? Answer me that, lad! Who was ut that had an order for a mansion in th' hands av' th' contractor, an' her own sanction av' th' same, before that glib divvle come—him wit' th' smilin' front an' th' handy knife, as it proves? Answer me that, sor?"

Scotty was apathetic again, the promise of action having petered somewhat. Magoon smoked his pipe and continued to evolve substantial happiness out of the future, segregating the years even, until the whole mellowed to a finish, crowned with a halo of girls and boys. That was a dream that made his lips dry and his eye-balls tingle. Did he not father and champion the rights of half the children of Contention now?

The night was thick and hot and late. There was no moon, but every billion miles there shone a hardy star. The shrunken Mammon moaned as if in pain. Scotty woofed.

"What is ut, lad?"

Scotty leaped up and barked loudly.

Out of the utter dark from behind came a sound of bare feet, and presently there appeared a man attired only in trousers and a sleeveless gauze shirt.

"I'm Colter," the man panted, shrinking back from the lighted door-way.

"I see you are," said Magoon, beckoning the bristling collie down.

"I got away from Buckamuck and came here."

"An' what for?"

"She told me to come to you—the lady. I was in Broderic's saloon two nights ago to buy a bottle of wine. It was our wedding anniversary and Nettie suggested that we celebrate. Vanreb was there and undertook to have fun with me. I was unarmed and got away. He was knifed in the back later that night."

"Go on," said Magoon. Scotty was quiet again.

"They locked me up the next morning before I knew the charge. Nettie came to me last night. Higgins was guarding the door. He saw a bottle of whiskey sticking out from her shawl and appropriated it. There was a sleeping-dope in it, and when it worked, she took his key and told me to come here to you."

They had moved inside. The sheriff's lips were white, distorted; his face was drenched with sweat and the dim glow of agony was manifest in the gray eyes. Suddenly Magoon lifted the lamp from the table, shoved it close to the pale face of the prisoner and stared into his eyes.

"Nettie knows that I was with her before Vanreb left Broderic's and that I never left the cottage that night," Colter said.

"Go into that room," the sheriff commanded in a grating voice, as he put the lamp down. "I may be gone a week or th' small part av wan, but stay you here an' make no noise. Th' Chink will feed you, sor."

That night Magoon rode down the river-bed to Buckamuck for the first time in two years, and Scotty followed almost gayly, for night-rides had come to mean action. Dawn was perceptible when he reached the "Belle Mare" claim. His old cabin had been enlarged and improved. He stumbled over a circlet of stones and the smell of geranium leaves was borne up to him. The voice of the woman which answered his knock was softer than he had ever heard it.

"Hello, Nettie. It's me—Magoon."

"Oh, all right, Danny. Just a minute and I'll let you in!"

Then Magoon's throat tightened as if in the wrenching of powerful fingers. There was another voice in the cottage. The door was opened and she stood before him in the lamp-light, the red hair hanging down in thick braids, her face pale and anxious, but ineffably sweeter to him—and a bit of a babe in her arms.

"I told him to go to you. Have you seen him, Danny?" she asked quickly.

"He's safe in me shack up the river," he answered, and his eyes were moving about the room. It was not as he had left it. There were plush chairs about, and a center-table, supporting books and a fancy lamp whose light brought out vividly the sweeping figure of the carpet on the floor. The child was grieving a little.

"In trouble—I thought of you first, Danny."

"I tol' ye t' do ut, Nettie, gurrl."

"But why are you here?"

He turned to her swiftly and answered: "T' larn if ye wore happy, deere. Is he good t' ye?"

"Good as gold, Danny. No woman could have been happier than I 'till now. I tell you, it's a shame—no word is strong enough—that they can't let him alone with their horse-play. Haven't I always been square to the boys? Then why can't they let me be happy, Danny? He was with me at nine o'clock the night Vanreb was killed. He's home every evening—reading or talking with me or playing with little Danny here—"

"Did I hear you say 'Danny' in riference t' anny thing?"

"It's the name of the baby," she said, smiling at him.

"Oh, Larud, let me holt av ut!"

He seized in his arms the blinking cherub of a year. The crying had ceased. "An' ye called ut 'Danny'—" he repeated softly.

"It was his father's suggestion—and mine," the woman answered from the kitchen, where a fresh fire was blowing. Scotty had entered the rear way. The collie regarded the man and the babe in his arms for an instant with tolerance; then resigned himself disconsolately under the kitchen table. Things had come to a dreary pass when a ride in the night degenerated into such a bore as this.

"Well, Nettie, I must be off; there's wurruk for me, sure."

"I'll have a cup of coffee for you in a minute, Danny," the woman called.

He had to clear his throat before he answered:

"I'm for ut, Nettie. Make a cup for Sheriff Danny here, too, an' a platter av pork chops. Sure th' lad must be fed."

Full day was upon the Mammon when he emerged from the cottage. A couple of miners were passing.

"I'll take care of you. 'Tis nothin' but a misunderstandin', on the parrt av th' byes. I'll set thim straight, Nettie, deere. Come Scotty, lad. Good-bye an' wipe your eyes, gurr!"

He turned in the saddle and saw her standing in the morning light, holding the child and waving her free hand to him. He set his jaw hard but it would not stop the twitching of his lips. Buckamuck was quiet. The two miners who had seen him in the Colter door-way rode hurriedly through the town headed north. At Broderic's saloon Magoon learned that most of the miners had laid off to find Colter; that the men had been drinking heavily for three days, and that a party of a dozen had left a half hour before, riding up the river toward Contention. The Sheriff remounted and rode for two hours, far to the right of the river-bed; then regained the old trail a mile ahead of the men, whose voices were borne to him at intervals up through the cañon. He reached his own shack in Contention early in the afternoon. All was well there.

Magoon sat in his old place at the door-way, as the revelry in the town grew louder. The racket disturbed Scotty, who woofed frequently and shoved his head under the man's arm for an explanation. Contention had stopped work to entertain its guests. In the early twilight the voices drew nearer, but became hushed as the men swayed closer to Magoon, which peculiarity made plain to the

Sheriff that there was deviltry in the wind. The two who had seen him leave Colter's were in the crowd, which numbered twenty-five at least, including the citizens of Contention.

"'Tis a great honor, byes, that you're besthowin'," the Irishman said pleasantly. "My Orientil mandareen is bringin' out th' dhrink an' th' seegars; an' whilst we're waitin' for th' kittle t' bile, so t' speak, tell me what's festerin' av your minds."

"We're lookin' fur Colter, Danny, havin' news fur him brought from Buckamuck," said Shorty Cable, who was a shyster lawyer when drunk.

"So, an' how long since they appinted you polis messenger an' persecutin' attorney, Mister Cable?"

"Oh, drop that, Dan. We want Colter," observed Corny Lusk, who was a fighter, but a fair shade of white mostly.

"That's wan way t' spreak a message," the Sheriff answered. "You want Colter. You'll not git him from me. You have your answer, Corny."

"You know where he is, bein' at his house last night," put in Shorty. "The lady must have told you, Danny, during your con-ver-sations."

"If I know, 'tis no sign ye will—ye runt av a polecat. I was on th' Mammon thrail last night an' knocked at Colter's dure in th' light av mornin'"

Shorty laughed derisively and made a remark to the man nearest. The little gray eyes of the Sheriff turned hard and sharp.

"I say, byes, 'tis time I wore readin' my evenin' paaper. If there's annythin' more t' say, get rid av ut through a clane mouth-piece. I warn ye I'll hear no more this day from Shorty Cable!"

"Look here, Dan," said Corny Lusk, elbowing Shorty back, "we hang in Buckamuck for knifin' behind. If you know where Colter is, its up to you to spit it out."

Magoon looked away over the castellated hills, sharply black against the fiery sunset disk, rubbed his hand roughly across his face, then said in an even tone:

"'Tis an unhealthy life out here on th' Mammon, lads. A man has t' be jerked up ivery now an' a little, an' borrn agin, as Dante says, t' kape up th' sthandin' av morils in th' sittlemint. Last night I rode down th' thrail t' help Buckamuck hang Colter, an' th' ol' winch av a Mammon kapes sayin' all th' way in th' moon an' th' darrk, 'See th' rid-haired gurrl first, Danny!' 'Twas in th' light av mornin', as I said befure, that I knocked at her dure, God knowin' th' thoughts in th' head av me. 'Nettie,' I says, 'did your man do th' knifin' on th' rear av Vanreb's carcass?' 'No,' she says 'do I luk

like th' wife av a cuttin' coward, Danny?" "You do not," says I, "but are ye happy, Nettie,—is Colter good t' ye, gurr!"

"She lugged at me wit' a shmile on th' swate face av her; thin cast her eyes down t' th' wee boondle in th' cruk av her arm, an' wit' a laugh, she says, 'Do what you can for him, Danny. I don't blame th' byes, for they don't understand my man, that's all, or they wudn't grieve me so. You tell them, Danny,' she says, 'tell th' byes that they're all right, an' I belave in them, on'y they're wrong this time,' she says. 'Tell thim t' bring back my man t' me, Danny, for I nade him sore, an' th' little wan is chryin' for him day and night.'"

The little sheriff spat meditatively, and then turned to Corny Lusk. The boys were quiet.

"D'ye 'mimber, ould parrdner, whin we bint our backs side-by-side on th' lower Mammon; whin th' days wore long an' there was little shine av yellow t' pay for thim? Ah, thim wore th' harrd days, lad, an' dull, indade, was that night that had no shootin' t' crown th' glory av ut; an' grub was vile an' men wore half mad from th' river an' th' dhrink. Ye 'mimber ut well, Corny, an' who was th' swate angil av mercy in our midst, whin ould Buckamuck was new? Ye know well who she wore, lad!"

Magoon's head now turned slowly to Shorty Cable and it was a stunning blow that was then delivered:

"An' *you*, ye little leech, who made grool for you, whin that wormy t'imblefull av brains av yours wore wandherin' for days an' days from th' butt av 'Nig' Doble's heavy gun? There was a knife in 'Nig' Doble's kidney afterward, but *you* did not hang, Shorty Cable!"

He gave them no rest now, but seized upon Bill Haley, a decent Irishman, whose face was already working. "Who pulled you out av th' clutch av typhoid, sittin' nights an' nights in th' reek av your lamp, an' shmilin' whin you mumbled th' question, as t' what parrt av hivin you wore lyjn' in, believin' av course it was hivin' for her bein' there! Sure, an' wud've ast th' same question, deloorium or no, Bill."

"D'ye 'mimber byes, whin we set th' leg av Corney Lusk here, afther he had crawled four miles into camp, an' his kicker wore as big as a sthove. Three av us it tuk t' twist him back in shape, an' there was niver a whimper out av him, because th' rid-haired gurr! wore holdin' av his hands. Who was ut that fed an' mended us, byes, gave us grub free whin we wore broke? Who was mother an' sister an' swate-heartt t' ivery an' baste av us? Who held th' Mammon canon from bein' hell altogether in thim airy days when ould Buckamuck was new?"

Magoon halted, brushed the drops of sweat from his face with his

sleeve, looked from face to face; then suddenly jerked them all erect with the thundered question:

"Did th' rid-haired gurril iver lie t' anny man av ye?"

The negative was murmured back, and he resumed sadly but without anger:

"What has come over ye, lads, t' forget all these things—all th' ould days? I know ye all loved her—savin' me—who cudn't love a woman—"

The boys were laughing now, and the voice of the little sheriff trembled, for he saw that he had won.

"An' I know 'twas crool harrd t' see th' stranger from th' States snatch her from your grasp—'twas that indade! I feel for ye all, but did woman or angil iver earn better th' right t' fall into th' arrms av th' man av her choice? Larud, Larud, how she earned ut, lads! An' she niver lied t' man av us—?"

The negative was roared to him now.

"Thin I want t' ask ye wan thing more, lads: Is th' wurrud av th' queen av all our harts—is th' wurrud av th' rid-haired gurril good or not good for th' alibi av anny man—on th' wild rushin' banks av th' Mammon?"

Although the men of Contention were there in a body now to stand by their sheriff, they were not needed. The right answer was acclaimed. In the general excitement, Magoon dove into the shanty and brought forth Colter.

"This lads, is th' bye that did more than anny wan av us cud do in th' way av winnin' an angil for his own; an' this night we'll all go back t' Buckamuck an' ast her t' forgive us, as we used t' in the ould days, but we'll have a dhrink first, please God. Come, Scotty, we're for th' road agin!"

And so they started down the trail in the darkness, Shorty Cable walking a little apart from the others, and the little sheriff far apart from all—in his thoughts.

UNTRIED WAYS

BY SILAS X. FLOYD

FULL many a ship puts out to sea,
Not knowing what the end may be;
And if each tarried the end to know,
How many ships to sea would go?

FOR SWEET CHARITY'S SAKE

A SOCIAL SATIRE

By Ina Brevoort Roberts

Author of "The Lifting of a Finger"



I RAN down the steps of the flat-house in which I live and walked towards the subway, feeling, in spite of the glorious weather, anything but jubilant. It was Saturday afternoon and all the world would be pleasure-seeking, while for me—not a story in sight.

I set my heels squarely on the sidewalk, in a devil's tattoo that dispelled some of my irritation. After all, I thought, I might be a shop girl compelled to pass my days in a stuffy store, or a society woman spending a life-time looking for happiness in the wrong direction. In fact, I might be a whole lot of worse things than a reporter with health and nerves in good order, and spirits to correspond. Why, I'd rather be a failure at newspaper work than a success at anything else, I love it so.

Well, it did look as though I were to be catalogued as a failure—for to-day, at least, for I hadn't even an inkling of a story. I had read the "What is Going on To-day" column in all the papers; but it was still early in the season, so nothing was slated to happen except a euchre at the Waldorf under the auspices of the Kindness Club, for the benefit of the Waif's Home. Now, the gentle public doesn't clamor for news of euchres, unless somebody steals something or there's been a first-class row. Still, since nothing better offered, I decided, after I had reported at the office and my editor had expressed indifference in the matter, to cover this one. You see, there was a big strike pending which made holding her position more than ever a game of chance to an inexperienced space-woman hanging to the paper by the fringe of society events. Much prospect there was for a salaried position for me at this rate! I set my teeth and decided that there must be a story in that euchre.

I found the Astor Gallery at the Waldorf a medley of bright colors and chatter. Separately, most of the one hundred women present would have made imposing magazine illustrations; collectively they reminded me of an aviary.

I picked out half a dozen cockatoos, one scarlet flamingo, a couple of beautiful white herons,—and as for parrots, they were a drug in the market. To give contrast, even the sober, domestic hen was there, feeling her insignificance but trying to cluck contentedly just the same. The odd part of it was that for all their excited chatter and distracted running about the birds seemed peaceable and to be enjoying themselves.

I heard the grey parrot topped with pink feathers, who took tickets, tell a wren of a woman that she had stayed up till one o'clock the previous night getting the score cards ready.

"Why didn't you have your committee do that?" inquired Mrs. Wren. "Weren't they willing to work?"

"Oh yes, I had a fine committee," Mrs. Parrot replied, "and we had lots of meetings, but we didn't seem to get a great deal done; there was always so much to be talked over. But I didn't mind. I enjoyed working, especially for charity, only I wish I didn't feel so tired with the entire responsibility of this affair on my shoulders. I think it's going to be a great success, though, don't you?"

Mrs. Wren, also Mrs. Crow and Mrs. Green Parrot, who now made up the group, all agreed that the euchre couldn't help being a success with Mrs. Gray Parrot at the head and front.

I sat down on one of the gilt chairs arranged about the seventy-five tables and watched Mrs. Gray Parrot greet the new arrivals. Her welcome to each was like the fuss champagne makes when it's uncorked, and even between-times she kept bubbling up within herself. I had marvelled at her size but now I know that her massive frame was simply a tank to hold enthusiasm—champagne enthusiasm.

For a while she had something different to say to each one who came, but when arrivals began to block the doorway she fell back on set phrases, and by and by on a smile that was like the chorus that comes after the second verse of a song in a phonograph. The ticket and money-taking had long ago been relegated to a Miss Flamingo, and the job of the man in a box-office is a sinecure compared to hers.

The number of women present had swelled to two hundred, the low hum of chatter had become loud and shrill, yet above it I could catch the strains of a delightful waltz being played by an orchestra on one of the landings. Oh, but I'd have liked to sweep all those chairs and tables from that beautiful smooth floor, and what wouldn't I have given to be able to exchange those two hundred women for one man who could dance!

I went to look at the prizes which were arranged on a long table at one side of the room. There were seventy, one for every four

players; the Mrs. Hawk who was guarding them proudly told me this. They included everything from steins to silk stockings. There was a box for the opera, and a smoking set.

At the moment of observing the latter I looked up to see a man emerging from the crush about the doorway. At first I thought he might be a reporter, but not after I could see more of him than the top of his head. He was a hot-house specimen of humanity, clothed in irreproachable afternoon dress, and he was going to play cards all of a glorious fall afternoon in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and five with two hundred and eighty women, or to be exact two hundred and seventy-nine—he would make the two hundred and eightieth. He was young, too, and looked able to swing a golf club or even to do a man's work in the world.

The women swept down on him in platoons; only one little chickadee stayed away and she, I could see by the way her soft eyes followed him, was in love with that card-playing imitation of a man.

By this time, the arrivals having all arrived, received their score-cards and found their places with the help of an indigo bunting, a purple martin, four screech owls and a belted kingfisher detailed for the task; the fluttering subsided somewhat, though not the chattering, for play had not begun.

I retired to the outskirts of the scene to get a comprehensive view of my aviary. Perched, the collection was not without attractiveness, but oh, the jumble of "shades," "tints" and plain, everyday colors. Only one woman had stuck to a single color in her costume. She wore gray that shaded from white to dove and she looked like one of those graceful birds you see circling over the Bay when there's a storm coming. At the opera the colors in the costumes are massed and blended to harmonize with the music; in the same way this euchre seemed set to ragtime. Another thing it reminded me of was a monster crazy-quilt.

A boy bugler blew reveille, and they were off. They were good for two and a half hours, during which I must sit and watch for something, anything to make a story. Presently a little bluebird tripped up to me. She was one of the seven women in charge, and her business was to act as umpire and punch the cards of those who won.

She inquired whether I cared to look at the prizes, and when I told her I had seen them she sat down beside me and asked kindly questions about myself—if I liked reporting and whether it wasn't terribly hard work. When the bugle that sounded to stop play had summoned her to the punching process I let myself fall to thinking.

I began to be somewhat ashamed of my superior attitude. "After all, these dear creatures meant well and they've worked like Trojans,"

said the sentimental side of me that only ventures to bob up when I don't keep busy. "They're working in a good cause and working peaceably. Moreover, they're standing by one another like men and brothers. Didn't you hear Mrs. Cardinal try to excuse Mrs. Waxwing's failure to account for the tickets given her to sell at the last euchre? In fact, have you heard anything this afternoon but billing and cooing? Isn't everybody here except your miserable self just full of kindness toward the world in general and fellow-members and orphans in particular? Is it a crime to lack a proper sense of color, and are you a blue-nosed Puritan that you see harm in a game of cards even if there is a collection of parasols and chinaware and silk stockings at the end of it?

A voice suddenly raised above the general clucking sent my self-abasement flying and made me sit up and take notice at once. Like a shot I was over in the corner where the commotion was, but it proved to be only a trifling difference of opinion that was soon settled.

Still, the game was beginning to warm up. By the fourth round various expressions that anyone familiar with euchre knows, were stealing over most of the women's faces. Some got the prize-hunger in their eyes, others bent over the cards with the eager look of those who play for excitement's sake, while still others—well, they were wasting time gambling for mere bric-a-brac and trinkets worth only a few dollars.

As for the Only Man, I amused myself by inventing suitable titles for him. He was the Belle of the Ball, the Flower of the Flock, and—I couldn't decide between the Jack of Hearts and the Two-spot.

The room as well as the game was warming up, and the air—how all those women stayed in it from choice was beyond me. Several windows were opened by the hotel attendants, but the players nearest them complained of draughts and they had to be closed again.

The sixth game closed and the women jostled each other to get in their places for the seventh. Mrs. Sparrow glared at her new partner, Mrs. Gray Owl, who played sleepily, and Mrs. Hawk wore the look of a martyr when she found herself for the third time opposite Mrs. Bluejay, who, it transpired, had never played euchre before and had come innocently expecting to be shown how. She was.

The seventh game was nearly over when something happened. I didn't leave my seat this time, I merely watched. I had seen a woman's purse slip from her lap to the floor and another woman's hand lift it to her own lap. Just one second later the first woman, Mrs. Bobolink, discovered her loss. "Oh, my purse is gone," she cried, and jumped up in an excited fashion that stopped play in that vicinity and brought half a dozen other women to the table. I was there, too, by that time.

"Mrs. Kingbird has your purse, I saw her pick it up," volunteered Mrs. Bobolink's partner, Mrs. Catbird, before anyone else could speak.

Mrs. Kingbird handed the purse to its owner. "I was going to return it at the end of the hand," she said.

Was she? No one but herself would ever know. Mrs. Catbird did not give her the benefit of the doubt. When the bugle had sounded and Mrs. Kingbird had gone away victorious, Mrs. Catbird returned to the curious group still hovering about the table.

"Going to return it! I'd believe that of almost anyone except her. Why, she's been put out of two clubs, and this one only keeps her because it would look queer for a *kindness* club to expel a member."

"I'm not sure we wouldn't have done it anyway," chimed in Mrs. Hawk, "if our lawyer hadn't advised us not to. He said she might contest our right to put her out and in law it isn't enough to *know* things, you've got to prove them."

"I know a woman," twittered Mrs. Indigo Bunting, "who used to know her before she came to New York to live, and she says she has no position in her own town at all."

"And I know a woman," contributed Mrs. Cockatoo, "who went to see her early one morning about some committee business, and there on a chair beside her bed was a whiskey bottle. She said she was ill."

The bugle sounded "Change," and the gossips scampered to their places. Just then Mrs. Catbird turned and caught sight of me.

"Oh, there's my dear little girl," she cried. "How do you do to-day? You look as sweet as a rose. Now don't write anything about us that isn't nice, will you?"

I laughed wickedly as I went back to my seat. On the way I heard one friend say to another who was fat, forty and shaped like an American bittern, "Why haven't you been to see me? Don't you know you owe me three calls?"

"Yes, I know it," replied Mrs. Bittern petulantly, "but with five hundred names on my visiting list what can you expect?" "Well, I don't wait for you, do I, dear?" was the retort. "I always say to myself: 'If the mountain won't come to Mahomet,' why—" I passed on out of earshot and never knew whether or not she finished her tangled quotation.

Compliments on this order were flying in all directions and I didn't much wonder, for I was feeling hot and cross myself and all that medley of colors was dancing before my eyes like a rainbow doing the cachucha. And I had only been looking on!

Fifteen minutes later "Taps" sounded, and then the real excitement began; what had gone before was merely preliminary. Before the last note of the bugle had died away the prize table looked like a bar-

gain counter. No third-rate department store ever held a more excited, eager-to-be-there-first-bound-not-to-get-left crowd than that collection of gorgeously gowned women wearing jewels enough to have decked an Indian temple. And the Only Man was in the thick of the fray. In vain the prize committee and the hotel attendants who had been called in to help preserve order tried to keep the women back. For a minute it looked as though there would be a wholesale run on the prizes; but at the crucial moment Mrs. Catbird's commanding voice made itself heard.

"Ladies, ladies, remember you are ladies!"

The throng fell back an inch or two, slightly disheveled and less than slightly ashamed.

Once under control, the crowd was managed, though with no little difficulty, and the prizes were finally distributed. While they waited the impatient ones regaled one another with their woes.

"My dear, I dislike quarreling, especially over cards, but you can't let people walk right over you."

"No, of course you can't." This was from my dear little bluebird, who looked worn out.

The last prize left was a case of mineral water.

"Oh, I don't want that," said the woman who was entitled to it, in a disappointed tone.

"I'll take it then," says the next one on the list, and up she steps and claims the case. My, wasn't the first woman mad as a wet hen, though!

The Only Man won the silk stockings, and an old maid got the smoking set. Perhaps, who knows, it proved a mascot?

At last it was all over, and a nice condition those women were in to go home to their families. Drunk as lords, all of them. Not with liquor, oh dear no. There hadn't been a drop of anything but water at the Kindness Club's euchre. They were drunk with excitement and bad air and the mad riot of color they made. And more than all, they were drunk and drugged with weariness.

Mrs. Gray Parrot kept making the same meaningless remark to everyone she could get to listen; Mrs. Cardinal laughed incessantly though she looked as if she wanted to cry and Mrs. Bluejay went away on anything but cordial terms with Mrs. Robin Redbreast whom she had known for years. Mrs. Kingbird and Mrs. Chickadee quarreled atrociously without knowing what they were quarreling about.

Those women, the lot of them, had entered that room with hearts bursting with kindness; they left in suspicion of everyone, even themselves.

I watched the Only Man buy tickets for six other euchres.

On the way to the cloakroom Mrs. Catbird stopped me.

"Now deal gently with us, won't you, sweetheart?" she entreated. "Some of those women acted shamefully about the prizes, but you know euchres are given to raise money, so we can't be too particular about the people to whom tickets are sold. But you will be kind to us, won't you?"

I smiled. Oh, I meant to be kind all right, as a surgeon is or a dentist. I meant to give each one of those women a chance to see herself as she looked to the only sane person there when the game broke up.

My, how good the fresh air felt when I got outside!

Still, that euchre was a great achievement. I heard afterward that it netted \$200 for the orphans and it certainly won me a regular position on the paper.



THE HIDDEN STREAM

BY PHOEBE LYDE

DEEP, deep within my breast
Flows on my love for you,
Beneath the day's unrest
And all the long night through.

Whether I laugh or weep,
Let life be grave or gay,
I feel that current keep
Its full resistless way.

And yet so deep it hides
That none has ever known
My being's inmost tides
Are swayed by you alone.



TWO THINGS

BY EDITH M. THOMAS

IF all of Life we know, Death claimed this hour,
Two things there be would reck not of the scath:
A living love that spurns Death's transient power,
And love so dead Death spurns it from his path!

A DAUGHTER OF COSMOPOLIS

A HUMAN DOCUMENT

By Prince Vladimir Vaniatsky



BY birth, I am a daughter of cosmopolis. My parents were a mother from Gallacia, whose father, in turn, was the grandson of a Turk; a father born in Paris of an English mother and a Spanish father, but whose grandparents had contributed to his veins the blood of France and Austria. All were marriages for power.

With this birth-right there is blended the fire of many races in my veins. I know that somewhere back beyond the days when family records were kept, there was Roman and Phœnician, perhaps even a touch of the Orient, in my blood. I bear the marks. I am as cruel as a Phœnician princess could have been, as greedy for power and vain of glitter as the Roman dames of old Nero's days, or even the daughters of the Pharaohs. I can not recall the time when I did not long for power. How hampered I was you may easily judge. I was a woman-child. In physique, tall, slender, immature, with a form hardly more rounded than that of a boy of my own age; I was, therefore, not a typical woman of power. I was neither a Catherine of Russia, nor a Sapho, nor a Cleopatra.

My childhood was hardly one to be remembered with pleasure. We lived in an old house, half château, half farm-house, in the environs of Paris. A sluggish stream ran near, and the land lay flat and uninteresting. It was there my father and mother vegetated ten months of the year, in order that for two months there might be an apartment in Paris, and that my mother could don the glittering wings of a butterfly of fashion. My father was always with her, his Spanish eyes flashing from beneath his blonde brows at those who ventured to exhibit too great preference for the company of "La très belle Madame la Marquise de Esperanza."

And I? I remained at the Château des Choux, as my mother half merrily, half bitterly, called our place. For cabbages grew on the little estate, and they were sold in Paris markets, thus con-

tributing no small share to the modest funds from which the beautiful gowns of the Marquise de Esperanza came.

Racially, the Spaniard is a gambler. And, of a consequence, such was my father. My mother spent her nights at the opera, at receptions, dinners, musicales, and the thousand and one other diversions which Paris offers to its devotees, while my father went to the Carole of the Rue Royale, and there, over the baccarat table, hazarded what little gold he possessed. He was, however, an admirable gambler, taking reverses with the same equanimity which marked his various successes.

It was this gambler's passion that played an important part in my life. On an occasion a telegram arrived at the Château des Choux calling me at once to Paris. I was as happy as a child could be. I brightened up my simple little dresses, looked after my few choice ribbons,—left-overs from some of my mother's different seasons of gayety,—and spent no time in getting off, for it was not often I was allowed to go to Paris, that dear, delightful city of many pleasures. Upon our arrival at our apartment my old nurse—also my mother's maid—told me what had occasioned my coming. It was the event that always comes to a French girl's life, the arrangement for a *dot*, then marriage.

The handsome carriage which had met me at the *gare* left a few minutes after depositing me at our apartments. The footman had been instructed to go to the house of one M. Pedro Galea, a Maltese by birth, a most famous money-lender in Paris. My father had given a note at hand far exceeding his ready money, and up to the moment of my arrival he had been unsuccessful in his attempt to cover the note with money.

"M. le Marquis de Esperanza requests the presence of M. Galea at his apartment," was the laconic message delivered to the Levantine. The footman returned to the carriage with the money-lender at his heels.

"Pray be seated, M. Galea," said my father when the visitor had presented himself. Then with the utmost calm he broached one of the most unique propositions ever advanced to a money-lender. "I have in this case the Esperanza diamonds. You may, perhaps, have seen them worn by Madame la Marquise, at the Opera. Hein?" his eyes questioned and his voice lured. My father emphasized the place at which M. Galea might have seen the Esperanza diamonds, for he could not have seen them elsewhere, for M. Galea had not the entrance into *le beau monde*.

"Ah, yes," replied M. Galea, "they are very fine."

"Voilà!" said my father. "I am in need of a certain sum of

money. I will throw dice with you to see upon what terms you will advance money on them. That you will, I know. But, should I win with the dice I pay no interest on the capital loaned; you are to permit the use of them to Madame la Marquise, and I will aid you in your desire to enter the Automobile Club—quite a good club for one in your position. Should you win, retain the diamonds and I pay you fifty per cent. interest—which, as you know, means that I will be in your clutches the remainder of my life, and that you will, in the end, come into possession of the diamonds.”

“But would not the wealthy husband of the *petite fille* come forward?”

“That is a question not to be considered—here,” sternly replied my father.

M. Galea sat silent for a moment, and then opened the jewel case in which the splendid diamonds of the *Esperanzas*—the last remnant of that family’s former pride and greatness—lay glittering on their bed of black velvet. The deep, avaricious lines of the Levantine’s face grew deeper; his eyes, sunken beneath his bushy brows, glittered till it seemed that the coruscations of the diamonds were reflected in them.

Then he spoke slowly, with an effort. The astute mind of my father read his, but he remained silent, studying the money-lender.

“I am not a gambler, but, Monsieur le Marquis, you sorely tempt me.” So cautious was he that not even a sigh escaped him.

“A member of the Automobile Club might aspire still higher.” My father’s tone was that of one who mused within himself.

I had overheard the conversation, safely hidden within the deep embrasure of a window, behind a heavy curtain. My flesh quivered with excitement. There was no fear, but the thought of the great drama which lay before me so appealed to my fervid mind that I could scarcely contain myself. I heard the rattle of the dice in the box. My heart stood still; my breath stopped; I almost suffocated. I heard the dice click as they rolled on the top of the polished table. I could not tell who threw first, and no word came from either man. It was a unique position, an *Esperanza* throwing dice with a money-lender. Again the dice clicked and a sharp intake of breath told the story. Instinctively, I knew it was not my father. I ventured to make the slightest rift in the curtain, and then I beheld my mother, glorious in an evening gown, standing within a few inches of me.

“Carlo,” she said, sweetly to my father, “will you kindly take me to my carriage? I am dining with Madame la Duchess de Pontraven.” My father rose, courteously, and wrapped her evening cloak around her, gave her his arm, and together they went down the stairs.

I watched them from the window. My father helped her into the carriage, carefully and tenderly, then motioning for the footman to close the door, turned thoughtfully back to the house.

An exclamation from Galea caught my ear.

"My God, but they do die hard, those aristocrats!" Then a low gurgling laugh came from his thick throat.

Pride surged in my heart. I knew the day of the aristocrats was past, but, then, if die we must, we would still die hard, and with our colors flying, our bravery undiminished. It was thus our ancestors had died in battle; and thus the castes would die.

That my father won at the dice was not surprising. Fortune had persistently denied us her favors, but, when the last gasp came she rallied to us, only to let us again fall back to the continual struggle against her fickleness.

When Galea had departed I entered the drawing-room. My father sat at a table gazing, almost stupidly, at the slip of paper which represented the life of our shipwreck.

"Good evening, father," I said, and drew a chair near him and sat down. "I wish to have a serious talk with you," I went on, assuming an air of age and maturity which was ludicrous, and at which my father would have laughed had he not been suffering a relaxation from the severe nervous strain of the past hour.

"What is it, Baby?" he asked pacifically.

"I am seventeen," I answered, "quite a woman in years. Yes, and in knowledge and wit, also," I went on rapidly, for he had smiled a trifle impatiently.

"Ah, very well, that is as it should be," he replied.

"I know full well the reason of my immurement in the Château des Choux. It is financial. You have sent for me to arrange a marriage. Some wealthy personage of caste—possibly—will pay for my ball if the *dot* is secured—after my marriage. You now have the money for my *dot* and to pay your note. My ball alone would cost what your apartment does for two months, perhaps more. Is it not so, my father?"

"It is, truly, my daughter."

"You have a considerable sum. More than your obligations—your debts," my voice betrayed my eagerness. My father frowned. He had never discussed family matters before me, much less with me. But my mother had told old Julie. The sequence is easy.

"I do not understand you. Your remarks are unseemly in one of your age—and—you take a privilege—unwarranted."

"Give me a chance, my father," I interrupted, "You have it

in your power. Present me. Do not arrange a marriage for me. I have no *dot*. Dress me gorgeously, let me alone, I will meet people, with your presence, and I shall take care of myself."

"*A l'Americaine!*" My father's voice thrilled me with its great horror. My revolutionary ideas so different from all the pre-arranged marriages of our caste in France and Spain, displeased him greatly. And yet the freer English blood spoke in the slight smile which came to him. Waiting not for his answer I ran swiftly to my mother's room. Across her bed lay a crimson gown, discarded as not fresh enough for so important a function as a dinner at Madame de Pontraven's. My mother's form was almost as slight as my own. I called Julie.

"Quick!" I cried, "help me into this dress."

"Your mother!" she gasped, wide eyed and astonished.

"No words, Julie!" I donned the gown with feverish haste. My hair, heretofore worn in two great, heavy braids down my back, was quickly arranged, and, as Julie's deft fingers worked in it I beheld a barbaric head-dress of coral lying carelessly on my mother's dressing-table. I grasped it and slipped it over my hair and noted with exultation that its deep red made the blue black of my hair blacker yet. I drew on a pair of long black gloves. The sweeping train of the gown, sparkling with little spangles of crimson metal, spread like a fan behind me.

At that moment I stood in the drawing-room door.

"See, my father!" I cried exultantly, and held out my slender arms. "Is there a more beautiful woman in Paris, excepting, always excepting, my mother?" He turned, and, as he saw me his eyes grew dazed.

"Clothilde!" he cried. At first his tone was that of rebuke, of anger, but so rapidly did his emotions change that before my name had left his lips the light of admiration leapt into his eyes. "You are even more beautiful than Rahel," he cried. Rahel was my mother, and whom all Paris loved to call "Rahel the Beautiful."

"Then we will go to the Opera to-night, my father," I cried. "I heard you tell madame, my mother, that the Dorniche box is at your disposal. My entrance there will dispense with my ball, and—" without further considering my father I turned to my old nurse. "Julie, a carriage, then bring me a mantle suitable for my costume!" Then I went up to my dumbfounded father and holding his coat and opera hat, begged, "Come!" That was all.

"Come, then, *ma belle petite*," he answered back, fully alive to the situation. "Come then, and I will show you a sight of the

world in Paris to-night. It will do me more good than playing baccarat in a stuffy room with chances to lose."

"Your chances are to win, to-night, my father," I meekly replied.

Of a consequence, we were later than the fashionable world usually is at the Opera. But it made my unique début the more startling.

The heads that turned toward me, the eyes that gazed upon me during the evening thrilled me as a strange new wine might have done. Then, suddenly, in a distant box, I espied Madame Diane de Savigny, with whom I had been at convent at Bruges, but a few years back. She was older than I, and was married.

"I am going to Madame de Savigny's box, my father," I said, "You will come with me, will you not?"

My father laughed. "Diane and I are great friends," he announced with zest, "but, where, my daughter, did you come to know her?"

"In the convent, at Bruges, my father; but come with me," I urged.

As we entered Diane's box she looked at us in a puzzled manner. She nodded to my father and bent her sharp, cruel eyes upon me with an expression boding me no good.

"Ah, has Madame de Savigny forgotten the little Clothilde de Esperanza to whom she often gave chocolates at Bruges, and so much to the horror of Sœur Gonzague?" I asked, watching every pulse in her face.

"Why, Clothilde, *ma fille*," she cried, and laughed at the thought of other days.

"She's in masquerade, to-night," my father explained, "she is attired in one of her mother's gowns, and, by some strange power persuaded me to bring her to the Opera. I might say, rather, that she brought me to the Opera."

"Chut!" exclaimed Diane. "The masquerade is so becoming that she must remain masked."

And that was all. In the morning Diane de Savigny came to our apartment before I had arisen. She entered my little room where I slept.

"Wake up, my child," she cried, and shook me gently by the shoulders. "Come, your reputation was made overnight. You awake to find yourself famous. You have been paragraphed in the papers. Nothing can now make you pause. You must be presented; you must become a butterfly of fashion, as am I. You will marry soon and marry great wealth."

"But I have no *dot*!" I cried in affectation, for I knew how I had won. "I have no *dot*; then how, Diane, can I marry wealth?"

"Chut! If you married a Parisian that would be necessary. But Paris is the Babel of the whole world. There are a thousand people here, and in all those there are many who would take you, not for the *dot*, but, *ma petite*, for your beauty, your family and the wit I shall teach you."

Madame de Savigny had a wonderful power. My mother, like my father, succumbed to her commands. Only in her case—my mother's—it was the helplessness of the situation that permitted me to go on as I had begun.

It was not love for her that actuated Diane de Savigny. Far from it. Nor was it good-nature. She had been a rival to my beautiful mother, not from any love she felt for my father, but for my mother's position as the most beautiful woman in all Paris, and for the novelty of saying that she had outrivaled her, if not in the adoration of Paris, in the attention of her husband. *Voilà!* Madame de Savigny would help me. And should she refuse? *Pas de tout!*

I doubt if all Paris contained a more worldly woman than Madame de Savigny. She was not beautiful but she had the style of her race, a wit at once caustic and pleasant—according to the mood in which she lay, or the person to whom she talked—and a temper unsurpassable even by devils. And Paris humored her, for she was Diane de Savigny, daughter of that Duc d'Ardennes who quartered his arms, sinister, with his own less heraldic achievements. Diane d'Ardennes could have aspired to whatsoever she might please; she married a count of Napoleonic ancestry. But, he had wealth; and the great hotel, and the magnificent châteaux of the Duc d'Ardennes had been maintained until her marriage, upon the strictest lines of economy.

Into her hands I was placed as no other girl could have been. With the power of the d'Ardennes, the wealth of the Savignys, and my own beauty and my wondrous family, Diane could hold me forth to the eager world as a prize few could hope to win. My mother's fame as a beauty, my father's reputation as a man of the world, and a family as old as the hills, made me no newcomer.

"You shall have a ball, my Clothilde," declared Diane. "You shall have a ball, the like of which Paris has not seen since the advent of the République, and of which all the world will long talk. It will be one grand scheme, the scheme of my life." And Diane rose with a grace that was new to her, for it was her first ball for a debutante. And it was such as only could be given in the vast frescoed ball-room of l'Hotel d'Ardennes.

My gown! *Juste ciel!* It was Irene's triumph of the year. How can I tell you of it, save that it was a mystery of green, and gold,

and silver—the green of the sea as it breaks into foam, the gold of the inner heart of the butter-cup and the silver, faint as the tracings of the *escargot* on the big purple leaves of the vines in Burgundy. I was even in love with my own beauty as I stood before my glass. And my mother paled at the thought of the rivalry I offered to her. But my father kissed my brow and gazed in wonderment at me.

I danced. Heavens, how I danced! And as I kept step first with this “catch” and then with the other, my brain whirled. The man who now held me they called “the little wine bottle,” because his mother was the widow of a champagne dealer whose fame ran high, and his face was almost as yellow, from his dissipation, as the labels on her bottles. The next who whirled me over the smooth floor, the world delighted to honor because his father had financed the loans of a dozen lands. That he wore a title, bought as he would buy a costly coat, and had acquired a “von” did not, for me, take away the odor of the Judengasse, from whence his tribe had come. And so on through the list of eligibles with whom I danced, as a lamb led to slaughter. They were all old, though young; all covetous, though unable to grasp the prize they sought.

And in the depths of my heart that night I read what I had not before known. Wealth alone, power alone, would not, could not, satisfy me. He who had those attributes must also—be a man. And such, these men who danced with me, who coveted the prize Madame de Savigny held out to them, were not. I could see through their shallow eyes the vitiated souls which accorded with their weak, worn frames. There was not a wholesome man among them.

I stood for a moment with Baron Karl von Hohenkoenig, by a massive silver rail that surrounded a spot in the center of the ball room, and he related the tale of its origin. His weak, thin voice went on telling how the Dauphin of France and a Duc d’Ardenne had fought on that very spot for the favor of a lady of the French Court. Listening to Baron Karl, lisping his insinuations, marring a pretty story by his reflections, I saw in the distance a *man*. One who in my young mind filled the term of man to idealism. He was at the farthest end of the room, talking gaily to an old dowager. His broad shoulders, fresh color and powerful frame, spoke not of nights begun when the last star of the morning was dim. But, he was, evidently, not among the elect who were brought to place their names upon my dance-card. No one brought him to me. Even Diane ignored him when I was concerned. When I asked her of him, and gave a graphic description, she could not place him, she was at a loss to know how such a person had passed, without her knowledge, into her halls; but in admitting this she laughed.

"Ah, here is His Majesty," she said, and with all the pomp and ceremonial that doth surround a king, she presented me to His Majesty, The Emperor of Kermah. I courtesied to the weazened little dwarf whose muddled brain had evolved the idea of a desert empire, but my eyes were searching after The Man while my ears listened to the unctious voice of his Majesty.

"I hope we may see mademoiselle at our capital, El Gahir," he said. A moment later we parted, and, with a laugh The Man who had drawn my attention, took the emperor by the arm. His voice sounded as wholesome as his big form looked. "Come, Jean," he said, "drop that foolishness about being an emperor and having a capital." Then they disappeared in the crowd, and I felt my heart go after The Man of Men.

"Who is he?" I asked of Diane, careful not to betray my mind.

"I do not know," she answered. I doubted her. She went on, "I do not know one half of the people here. How could I? They are not on my calling list; from that I tell their wealth, their rank, their desirability. Oh, you are so young, Clothilde, to be asking 'Who is this?' and 'Who is that?' You have had presented to you the most charming gentlemen of rank, wealth and position; the most eligible in every particular, and, you know, you have no *dot*, and—and you must make your mark at once." This last was with a bit of a sting that then I did not fully understand, and which only a woman like Diane could give.

But, somehow, my heart whispered that she *did* know The Man. That he was the one for whom she most feared at my hands. Was he French? No! His very physique disavowed that. Was he Dane, or Austrian, or Russian? This was a question that could not be answered. I determined, as a woman will, that I would take him from Diane. I knew, oh, how surely I knew, that she was holding him back from me. A woman knows, even at her first ball, the inner recesses of a sister woman's heart. I could win him from her, not from any motive of spite, but because a woman loves to feel and to show her power. For to every woman grown there comes the desire for power. To feel that important things are the outcome of the quick wit, or the deep thought that brilliancy of mind or years of experience bring, is as wine to the pulse.

After My Ball there came other gayeties. Many here, many there, and always I hungered and looked in the crowds for the Man. I asked Diane of him no more. I waited and watched.

A little party of us were gathered at the Pavilion Blue, at Fon-

tainebleau on the day of their nuptials. How many romances have begun and ended within its precincts; I say ended, for many bridal couples have come to Fontainebleau on the day of their nuptials. And, of course, the romance of a man's and woman's life ends, in the eyes of the world—the unthinking and unrealistic world—at their marriage, which is the very beginning of the real romance of life.

The Baron Karl von Hohenkoenig—that petty jest of an Austrian Emperor, who in ennobling a financier had said that a man who lent money to a king was as high as the man who borrowed it—was told off to me. Diane had settled upon him as my *futur*. But I soon settled that he should not be. We were allowed to wander off together—and for this reason alone I allowed this idea of Diane to foster and grow, because it gave me the liberty I coveted—so well understood was the fact that I would some day be the Baroness von Hohenkoenig. But when we were well away from the party, almost alone, I shivered, I trembled, as if struck with a chill.

"Run for my chiffon wrap," I commanded of him, and, as his weakling's body disappeared among the turns in the avenue, I, too, lost myself from the world. For a second I smiled. And—then—there stood before me The Man of my first ball. The man who had led away His Majesty the Emperor of Kernah, and tweaked his egotistical ear for his impudence. He seemed fresher and stronger than ever before. He was garbed in light grey that was wonderfully becoming. He appeared to be waiting for some one. My heart caught quickly and I felt I was the woman of his fancy. He came quickly forward, with an ease which does not belong to foreign men who have to be presented to a woman before they can address her.

"Are you lost, mademoiselle?" he asked, and his voice thrilled me.

"No," I promptly answered, "I am waiting for a funny little man to bring me a wrap. You may have seen him somewhere, for he seems to have been gone overlong." The explanation was needlessly extended, but otherwise I could not make conversation. A few steps led us—for he kept pace with me—into yet other avenues. We talked of things agreeable to ourselves—to ourselves only.

Nature made me a will-o'-the-wisp, and Baron Karl von Hohenkoenig wandered aimlessly for some time. He could not find me, so returned to the pavilion.

"I have sought you long," said The Man of Men, his eyes aflame, and his hand touching mine ever so lightly, as if begging pardon for the familiarity, and I longed to have him seize it with the ardor that was filling, nay, even consuming, his heart.

"And I have waited—have watched—ever so long," I boldly gave back, for oh, I was determined that now was my opportunity.

"Do you remember, I saw you at your first ball? Do you know it was then I met my Fate?" His hand fell a bit closer to mine.

"Alas, I only know it was then I met my own Fate," I answered back, for oh, I feared the opening of some treacherous avenue would reveal us to the crowd.

Then his hand clasped mine in a close embrace and we stood in the open, with the eyes of Diane and Baron Karl upon us.

"She was lost and I have brought her safely back," explained The Man of Men. "Madame, you should not permit a child like this to wander so far alone," and he gravely led me to her who stood before the world as my chaperone.

"You hateful little cat!" snapped Diane in my ear. But aloud and to The Man of Men, she said: "How good of you to bring the lost kitten back to me; she is wilful and strays abroad, sometimes, and we endeavor"—with a glance toward Baron von Hohenkoenig, and a mumbling of words which might be understood to be by my affianced—"to keep her in sight." Then Diane laughed, a maliciously gurgling laugh, and with stern face and cold eyes went on to The Man of Men, "But, nevertheless, we thank you for restoring her to us." Then she turned coldly from him as if she had never seen him before. However, I caught the gleam in her eyes which told me her heart's history. But, oh joy, it met with no response from him.

It was evident that she did not intend me to know him more, or that I should even learn his name. He stepped back into the shrubs and we passed on to our party. And, here, my romance began instead of ending, though Baron von Hohenkoenig's romance, at least so far as I was concerned, may well be said to have ended at Fontainebleau. So, also did that of Madame Diane de Savigny.

Later, in the shrubbery I heard the sound of a voice I knew as it said: "Don't be so agitated, Diane; allow me to ask you to present me formally. I am determined to know her and you may as well be the one to claim the honor of making the match, for I also intend her for my wife." Then I slipped away, for I would not be a listener to what might be only confidential between Diane and The Man of Men. Oh, la, I do not know so much about him, yet this I do know, that whatever is in his heart for me I shall be glad to hold.

Diane could not have cared so very much, for on the day after she brought him to me and made the formal and necessary presentation.

His name is—Martin, plain John Martin, and he is a secretary of the American Embassy. He is well-born, I know, because his mother is so gentle, so kind, so stately. Gentle, yet with the repellant air which holds the vulgar aloof; kind, still with the reserve that forbids encroachments; stately, and yet seeming to be most graceful. Perhaps he is wealthy,—most Americans are,—and perhaps he is not. But, in any event I am not required to have a *dot*. And, my life-long study at the Château des Choux will be good training for a man of modest means. It is The Man that holds my heart—not the sordid *sous*.

His mother wears some beautiful jewels, some rich laces; her gowns are exquisite and are made in Paris, so—of course, if it is a matter of wealth, I shall appreciate that also.

First, the gem,—*comprenez-vous?*—and then the setting. To me, The Man is the gem. And the principal thing is, he is mine, mine, *mine!* He loves me; and I? Why, I too, love him, and if my dreams of wealth and power are not for much, I have the wealth of his love, the power of life and love, with, to me, The Man of Men!
Pas de tout!



EPISODE

BY F. ROBBINS

HEART with Love's flag half-mast high,
Love has come, but Love passed by.
Faithless Hope his colors bore;
Folly opened wide the door,
And he stopped a little space,
Ere he turned away his face.
Now thou shalt alike repent
That he entered, that he went.

Though noon glory be withdrawn,
Grateful was the radiant dawn.
Master of the subtlest art,
Hope has gladdened soul and heart;
Folly more than Truth was wise,
While she dwelt in Paradise.
Better far my flag half-mast,
Than that Love had never passed.

BUCCANEERS I HAVE KNOWN

By Captain Lloyd Buchanan, U. S. Army

Author of "The Regular and The Savage," "Beyond the Outposts," etc.



SOME eight weeks before the revolution broke out I was crossing the Isthmus of Panama in a railway coach. We had just passed Culebra Cut when a hand was laid lightly on my arm.

"Beg pardon, sir," said a voice, "but I'd like to ask you a question."

I turned, to find leaning over from the seat behind me a thin, hawk-faced little man, whom I recognized as the train news-dealer.

"What is it?" I asked.

He cocked his eyes at me with a look of infinite wisdom.

"Say," he whispered, "is this here revolution going through?"

"How the devil should I know?" I asked in astonishment.

"Tut! Tut!" he replied, knowingly. "You're a stranger. I've seed you with the Army officers in the cut, and with two or three of the natives I know are shoving the deal. People ain't coming to Panama now for their health. I don't savvy your lay, of course. But I'd bet dollars to pesetas you got a pretty good notion what the old Estados Unidos is goin' to do about buildin' this here canal. Ain't you?"

I assured him of my blank ignorance of the policy of my government, and of the entire willingness I would have to enlighten him regarding it if I were able to do so, until he finally either believed me or made up his mind I was so faithful a liar that he could not drive me to the truth.

"Well," he said, with a sigh, "I'm sorry. You see, I'm lame, an' I can't work like other men—I live on excitement. I just come down here from the Klondike, hearin' of trouble startin', and if it comes—well and good. If it doesn't, I want to throw this job quick and pike up to St. Louis to get ready for the Fair. I wish you could tell me—but, of course—if you don't savvy—. Say, if you do find out anything, give me a hint—won't you?"

I promised, and he hobbled off down the aisle crying ten-day-old New York papers.

That night I saw him again in Panama, putting silver pesos on

"17" with inflexible fidelity and ill fortune, at the roulette table off the Plaza Cathedral. But I was never able to tell him the policy of the United States.

This is not fiction, but the truth; and this lame news-dealer is only a type of thousands who rove from one end of the world to the other, living on their wits and their daring, minding no law but necessity,—which is always the law of the Dusty Road,—and seeking their share of loot wherever gold is handled loosely or blood is spilled in fair or unfair fight. Panama at that time was peppery with world tramps asking nothing but a trifle and a chance to "insurrect,"—and, in the meantime, enough money to pay their hotel bills and for their drinks, and to buy an occasional stack of chips from the banker of their favorite game.

Afterward, when the revolution *did* arrive, I heard of patriotic gentlemen answering to such names as Señor Juan Smith and Don Carlos McCarty who helped push it ahead. You may remember that "West Point graduate" who commanded part of the Panama "fleet." Probably, along with them, serving Liberty in no matter how humble a capacity, my lame news-dealer somehow fattened his purse before heading for St. Louis.

Nor is this piratical spirit limited to the broken in fortune. In connection with that same revolution in the Isthmus I happen to know of two Americans of position who had inside information of the conditions in Panama, and who sat in a room in the New Willard in Washington, one night in the fall of 1903, consummating plans for putting through the revolution, obtaining a charter from the new republic, and forming a company of capitalists to dig the canal as a business enterprise. Mr. Pierpont Morgan was to be asked to organize the company. The total cost of the revolution was to be under a hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and all the equipment needed in addition to what the junta could supply was a pair of moderately fast small steamers, chartered, four six-inch guns, with ammunition, and fifty Krag rifles. The steamers and weapons were to be handled by Americans and Englishmen who had no special calling on earth. I have every reason to believe that, if Mr. Roosevelt had failed to act as he did, and any private concern had taken up the construction of the canal, the revolution would have gone off with an accuracy and style that has never been surpassed. But, unfortunately for art, Mr. Roosevelt did act.

South America, Mexico, and the West Indies are threaded everywhere by the trails of these adventurers of life. In Curacao you can find hatching any sort of a scheme you choose,—from a plan to smuggle a couple of bolts of silk and a case of champagne into Venezuela, to a plot for overthrowing a republic and putting a new dictator in its

capital. I met there in the same day a ruined American gambler, begging his passage back to the States, and the sons of Guzman Blanco, the banished Ex-President of Venezuela. The former stopped me opposite a Dutch cigar store and told me with the most pointed frankness what *he* wanted, but the latter, over their cigarettes and long iced glasses, mourned evasively of exile and confiscated estates in general. It is, then, not for me to say why they were frizzling on that sun-baked islet within fifty miles of the Venezuelan coast, when they might as well have been in the dear Paris that they know and love so well. But probably they knew—and Castro. I think I did, too.

Most of these soldiers of fortune are honest enough chaps—as honesty goes in the lands beyond the Pale. But scattered among them plentifully are the men who do not go home because they cannot, and who are called by strange names that their fathers never knew. Cashiered army officers, gentlemen of breeding, but a talent for copying other men's signatures, shifty-eyed fellows who shot too close from dark corners, clergymen who fled from the shame of ruined homes—they are all in the ruck, and a thousand more—playing the game for what stakes the flesh loves. The time is past when anything else can matter to them.

But I like best to think of the honest fellows, who adventure forth as gentlemen seeking fortune and pleasure fairly on the high seas of the world. I ran across such a man in Puerto Cabello. He was a solid, blue-eyed American—sailor, lawyer, engineer. He was of a good old Pennsylvania family, but he had followed the long trail to nearly every corner of the earth. He understood the secrets of China silks, and could bargain evenly with a Cairo shop-keeper—which is the essence of Eastern wisdom. He knew the scrape of the coral on your ship's bottom off the North Borneo coast, and the snow on the Indian hills where the road winds up to Thibet. He had fought the Spaniards in Cuba. He had fished for pearls in the Sulu Sea. He told me tales of gold,—of the wonderful quartz, self seen, glittering in the naked rock in the heart of Colombia, but after a road so cruel that no man would travel it twice. He knew the songs of the women of all the earth, as they were sung in Panama in the Frenchman's day, when champagne ran like water, and the white hand that took your gold piece yesterday was shrivelled and yellow in death to-day. He had seen the world and drunk life to the dregs at forty-nine, but when I knew him he was drawing some twenty-five hundred a year for keeping the company he represented from swindling so openly as to call down on its head the wrath of the republic where it operated. Incidentally, that wrath has since descended.

In South America, too, dwelt one of the pair of the ablest money-

making pirates I know. He was a Frenchman, expelled from Mexico by Diaz, and he came to a certain republic as the correspondent of a great European news-agency, at one hundred dollars a month. In a year he was running a local paper in English and Spanish, and he was the representative of at least six of the principal American dailies, weeklies, and agencies. He had a most fortunate arrangement for news gathering: the entire cable and telegraph staff in the republic were subsidized by him! He rarely went to find news: news came to him from agents everywhere. Yet his papers regularly footed itemized bills for horses and guides for travel and for imaginary craft used in gathering information.

The "Clara" was the chief of this ghostly fleet. Many an hour when our friend was apparently sipping his glass in the German Club or telling a doubtful story in the British Legation over his cigar, he was in reality—for proof see his expense account—flying on this tiny yacht before the gale, or smothering on her deck in the heat of the fever-infested Orinoco.

"Eef I lose me at piquet," he used to say,—he played abominably,—“what mattaire? I but buy me a leetle more coal for zee good sheep Clara.”

I saw one of the European agency's annual reports, which he laughingly showed at a dinner. In it was mentioned his rather heavy expense account—including the Clara!—but his services had been so excellent that he was voted a bonus of five hundred dollars. During the particular period the yacht was charged for, the sly fox was traveling as a guest on a United States war-ship!

At another time, during an insurrection, one of his papers cabled for photographs from the battle-field. He had no idea of putting his precious body in the column of route of a South American army in campaign. But he had to send the photographs—and he did. As an example of their nature the history of one will suffice. For a few coppers he hired fifteen or twenty peons and a drove of pigs. The peons he laid out artistically as dead in heaps in a cut cane-field. Then he placed on each body several pieces of cane and turned the pigs loose among them. The pigs eagerly devoured the cane. My buccaneer snapped his camera. Result—to the horror of civilized America—“Photograph of pigs eating the dead after the engagement at X!”

Yet somehow, in spite of his cleverness, which included his enthusiastic loyalty to the President in his local paper and his practice of delicately dating all damaging cablegrams from one of the West Indies, at last they tripped him up. I saw in a paper a few months ago that he had been given twenty-four hours to quit the country.

The other financier was half-way round the world,—an American,

well known to the army in the Philippines. During the first days of our occupation transportation of all kinds was in great demand. This man foresaw the condition. With a few dollars and a patched-up credit he bought or leased at the start all the native lighters and bull-carts in sight. Then he sat still and waited until the government hired them from him at his own price. His clear profits were fabulous, running into a thousand a day. But he had the spendthrift nature of his kind, and when I saw him five years later he was going white over losing thirty dollars in a little game of *vingt et un*. Yet he was heading for a new territory,—to make a fortune, he said, in timber.

So they live,—these free lances,—plunging on the red and the black, driving under full sail before the hurricane, scattering gold through their fingers, as they hurry feverishly on in the hope of finding more gold beyond. They are the real adventurers of the world to-day, playing the game in dinner-coats or khakie, with their revolvers at their hips, and their lips and their money for the first pretty girl who will take the two together. Their lives are not very good and their use is not always apparent. Yet there is about them something that harks back to the Viking blood in us, and that lends a touch of romantic sadness to the forgotten graves, thousands of leagues from home, where they lie—these buccaneers—as they fell, alone, on the trail to which none of them ever found an end.



THE BRIDAL

BY L. M. MONTGOMERY

LAST NIGHT a pale young Moon was wed
 Unto the amorous, eager Sea;
 Her maiden veil of mist she wore,
 His kingly purple vesture, he.

With her a bridal train of stars
 Walked sisterly through shadows dim,
 And, master-minstrel of the world,
 The great Wind sang the marriage-hymn.

Thus came she down the silent sky
 Onto the Sea her faith to plight,
 And the grave priest who wedded them
 Was ancient, sombre-mantled Night.

WINGS

By Jennette Lee



THE Rector and the Curate faced each other across the study table. They had been going over the list of parish poor. It was a long list and rather complicated, but at last it was finished. They leaned back and smiled at each other comfortably.

"Well, that is done," said the Rector, "the next thing is to make it work."

The Curate gathered up the loose papers, thrusting them into the worn bag beside him. He was a young man, with a face like the Hoffman Christ. He had also a wife and five children. The women of the church worshipped him. The men found him a good fellow. The Rector knew him for a hard worker. He watched him now, as he gathered up the papers, with a look of quiet understanding. The relation between them had a certain note of equality. It marked the younger man as capable of making his way without offence.

"By the way," said the Rector, still watching him, "The Actors' Alliance—how is it coming on?"

The Curate paused among the papers. He pushed back the hair from his forehead. "I've neglected it," he said. "There have been so many details, and this Chardon case—" He pointed to the papers.

"Of course." The rector's quiet nod acquitted him. "You've had too much. But Worden told me yesterday they are making a good thing of it in Hampton. He spoke of one or two phases of the work. It would seem as if we had the best chance here of any parish in the diocese—the 'Sanford Theatre' and the Saturday night plays for the College—"

"Yes, yes, I know—I've often thought of it. I did manage to do a little last year. But it lapsed." The tired look in the Curate's face brought out its humanness.

His rector regarded it kindly. "We need another man," he said, "Meanwhile you'd better give me the Chardon case." He held out his hand for it. "They need the stern lawgiver. It will do them good and it will free you for some thing better. There is a little girl acting at the 'Sanford,' a mere child, they tell me, drawing crowds. Look her up if you can."

The Curate took out his notebook. He looked inquiringly at the Rector.

"Oh, I don't know anything—not even her name. The report came up the back stairs early in the week, and this morning Evelyn said that the better class are beginning to go—some of our own people. It's the girl, they say. The play itself is poor stuff. But the girl is different. And being so young, I thought—"

"I will see her at once," said the Curate. He replaced his notebook and gathered up his bag and was gone.

The girl wandered about the room a little uncertainly. It was a large room with tall windows and huge, meaningless furniture set at regular intervals. The windows looked out into a row of dismal back yards. Across the tops of the houses one saw branches lifting to the sky—a kind of spring lightness. They held life in their tips, and seemed to breathe a little as they opened.

The girl came to the window and looked across to the trees. Her eyes were sombre with quick lights in them. The brow above them, square and wide, was a little drawn and the mouth, in its pointed place, held a line of doubt. No one would for a minute think of the face as beautiful. But one would look at it again, and then again. By and by he would see that the girl knew that he was looking—nor would the brow change its line, nor the mouth. She did not seem to mind that you surveyed the castle wall, that you even admired it and walked around it. She was busy at the citadel. Life opened fast to her—myriads of things that the mind must touch and taste and withdraw from, wondering. Her movements had been those of a free thing. Now she stood with her hands folded, her head a little bent and her eyes looking out to the tree-tops. Her quietness held something vivid—a kind of still waiting. One might have stroked the folded wings, but he would know that life quivered in them—a challenge to the air and wind and storm.

A woman's voice chimed in the room softly. It was like convent bells. It was the kind of voice that sounds behind grey walls, calling the heart to rest.

The girl turned quickly. "Yes, Mother."

"Would you like to go to walk?"

"To walk?" She paused, looking about the room, "I have been walking, haven't I?"

The mother smiled. "You are restless. The air will do us both good. See, I have finished it." She smoothed the work in her hand, spreading it out.

The girl came across and knelt beside her, examining it. It was

a beautiful piece of embroidery, rich like an altar cloth, but with no trace of the church's symbolism in its lines. The mysterious pattern suggested rather some quaint Eastern source. The girl lifted it with quick fingers, admiring it. "You do such beautiful things, Mother—and they are not the least like you." She was looking at it, a little wonderingly, as if just struck with the thought. She raised her eyes to the quiet figure beside her—with the grey dress and grey stemmed lines—"Not the least like you," she repeated thoughtfully. hair and grey eyes looking out—quiet pools fringed with straight-

A light rested in the eyes—a passing wing mirrored and gone. The face caught it and glowed. "You think it is not like me and you said it was beautiful—" She was smoothing the girl's hair, "you do not see the other side." The girl lifted the embroidery with a quick touch, like a child, turning it over. "It is just the same!" she said, scrutinizing it.

Her mother laughed. "Come, we will go for a walk." She folded the embroidery carefully and reached for the basket beside her.

A knock sounded on the door. "For Miss Seawell," said the bell-boy, proudly. He deposited a box on the table and produced a card. He searched in his pocket and found another. He handed them out. "They're both the same," he said.

The eyes of the mother and daughter met. The mother shook her head slightly. She hesitated. "Tell him he may come up for five minutes," she said at last, "we were just going out."

The girl's eyes danced behind the closed door. "Tommy Talcott!" Her fingers were untying the box, lifting a huge bunch of violets. The stems were tied with a white satin ribbon—yards of it. "Like a bride," she said, trailing it out. "It will make a lovely belt-ribbon." She laid a bit of it to her waist and danced a step across the room.

"Hush, Lita!"

The girl paused. She waited midstep. Then she walked demurely to the table and laid down the flowers. When she turned to the door her face was impressive and grave.

The youth bowed above her hand with exaggerated devotion. She motioned him to a seat near her mother and moved a little distance away.

The youth's eyes devoured her. He had a round, fat face and blue eyes that tried to look hard. His trousers were turned up a little at the bottom and he carried his arms with an arranged, a careful air—curved like sausages.

The girl surveyed him while he talked. He was richly a man of the world, caressing the silk ankle on his knee and commenting on

men and things in quick tones. He clipped his words and stroked his ankle and contemplated the girl with an air of possession—that halted a little, now and then, in doubt.

"Your violets are very beautiful." She motioned to the table.

"Not much. Best I could get. Beastly town for flowers," responded the youth.

"Oh, I think they are lovely."

The youth smiled. He lounged a little on his chair. "Say, do you know you were great last night—just great." He beamed on her. He expanded to himself.

The girl looked at him indifferently. "Did you think so? I was not so good as usual."

"Oh, say!" he protested, "You can't tell, you know. That place," he continued confidently, "that place when you come in solemn and grave and then do those stunts of yours—it's—," he paused for fit words, "it's great, you know—just great!" He stroked his lip and looked at her largely and seemed to be enjoying the way he was going it.

The mother, who had left the room for a minute, returned ready to go out. "You will excuse us, Mr. Talcott? We were on the point of going when you came."

"Certainly, Mrs. Seawell, certainly." He put her at her ease with a wave of his hand, "I'll go along with you." He was reaching for his hat.

"We would not trouble you." She stopped him midway.

"No trouble." He was murmuring it into his hat. "No trouble—"

The door had opened again to a card. The mother was reading it with puzzled brow. "Mr. George Steadman." She looked at her daughter. The girl shook her head.

"Tell him to come up, please."

The youth settled back. He would see his rival before he went. He had spent a hundred on her—boxes and flowers. Let any other man cut him out if he thought best. He curved his arms and waited.

It was the Curate, brushing the hair from his forehead and talking dreamily, with some shrewd common sense gleaming through and lighting the dream.

The youth stared at him with cool eyes. The cheek of the old buck! He had seen him somewhere before—Oh, yes—Curate—the pious dodge.

The Curate turned to him. Dreamily he drew from him his class—sophomore?—"I should not have thought it," murmured the Curate. The youth wriggled a little. "And what church do you attend?" "The Episcopalian? Ah, then I shall have the pleasure of calling on

you. I call on all the Episcopal students." The youth gasped. "Oh—" It was almost a wail—"but I'm not, you know—not exactly." The Curate looked at him keenly. "I'm likely to be out, you know," said the youth. It was a last flying leap. But the Curate had him fast. "I can call again," he said kindly, "I always call again when they are out. I like to see the boys in their own rooms. I seem to know them better." His tone had changed subtly. "Where do you come from—where is your home?"

"Talcottville."

"Your father is John Talcott then?"

"Yes, sir." The boy straightened a little at the sound of his father's name.

"I knew him in college—knew him well. He was years ahead of me, but used to come back to the games."

The youth stared at him. "You're not Steadman of Ninety-three?"

"I believe I am."

"Well, I know all about you!" It was half-boyish, half-manly. "But I didn't suppose you were a—minister?"

The Curate smiled. "I am—part of the time." He took out his card. "You must come and see us. Mrs. Steadman will want to see you."

The youth received the card in deferential fingers. He slipped away. They heard a door clutch softly. The girl laughed.

"Hush, Lita."

"But it was truly funny," she said. Her eyes were on the Curate. She was admiring the Hoffman head.

The Curate turned suddenly and found her doing it. He reddened a little. Women were still a mystery to the Curate. His wife had explained to him many times that there is no sin in admiring a picture by Hoffman. But she wanted him to be careful, and he plunged into explaining the details of the Actors' Church Alliance.

The two women listened with gentle intentness.

"It is what we have wanted," said the mother, "I had heard of it, but I did not know—and we spend so little time in a place."

"Precisely—that is the Alliance—to have the connections made."

"And I am to go to church to-morrow," said the girl wistfully. She was still looking at him.

"If you will. Ask for my pew. Mrs. Steadman will be there. She will want to call on you if there is time?"

"We stay till Wednesday."

"Then she will come."

A light came into the girl's face. "Would she—would you like a box?"

"A box—?"

"At the 'Sanford'—to see me—" The words laughed a little anxiously. "It is quite proper—now. Nice people go. They let me change the lines—I do as I like. I wish you would come!" Her hands were clasped impulsively. She was like a child.

The Curate smiled indulgently. "When do you want us?"

"Any time—Monday? Would that do? How good you are!" She flitted to a desk and wrote a few words on a card. "There. They will keep the box for you. I shall watch—you will surely come?"

"We will surely come." The Curate tucked the card into his pocket. "And to-morrow you will be at St. John's?"

"To-morrow, yes."

When he was gone the girl looked at her mother. "Something is coming," she said softly. She half put out her hand. "Something beautiful, and strange." The hand groped a little and drew back. "I think I am afraid."

Her mother's hand touched her arm and the vision broke. The girl laughed. She ran her hand across her eyes. "Come, let us go out—before it is dark—out-of-doors."

II.

The girl sat in the church, her hands clasped and her soul drifting. The color about her held her, and vague wonder, the stir of something lifting itself, and the gleam of the little windows high in the roof. She had not been in a church for years. They had spent their Sundays in the fields or on the road. She had not known that it was like this. The quiet of the place—falling deep on the heart, and the sense of something coming if one would wait. She had almost ceased to breathe. . . . the processional was calling, stern and hushed, through closing walls. It hovered faintly, like a bird, then it grew, lifting the heart. The girl leaned forward, watching the white-robed figures. One by one they entered the stalls, crossing her soul with gentle motion. The last was a boy taller than the rest, with a face of light. He took his place by the organ, a little apart from the others.

The girl sank back with a quick breath.

The organ swelled and sang and drew to silence, and the service went its way, intoned and sweet. The anthem rose, filling the nave, and high above it sounded a voice that thrilled the heart—little reeds shaken in the wind—a voice delicate and rare, with shimmering petals that fell through space, stars of light in quick descent. The air quiv-

ered to the notes and was still. The windows rained color on bowed heads and stone and wood, and angels trumpeting aloft. High in the chancel hung a bird with outspread wings that shone in the light. The eyes of little children loved it. The girl's eyes sought it now, like a child's.

The church about her grew vague, and gray, and dark; it fell away into space, and her soul mounted to the bird there swinging in light—to the white wings and polished breast, and the sound of a voice singing, faint and sweet, through the arches—singing, swinging, drifting—with the snow-white bird. Life centered in it, and rest—the great things she planned to do—slowly they circled and gathered in, a shadowy host. Her heart fell to singing—little dreams of truth, swift hopes rising over to the bird and the voice singing.

When she came back from the dream the Curate's wife was asking her to dinner. The service was done, the church was empty. The voice had receded, calling her as it went, dying to a last faint sound behind closed walls. "Amen," a drifting, fading call—"Amen." The white-robed figures were gone. The church was empty. The Curate's wife was asking her to dinner.

She turned with puzzled eyes and a little shake of the head, looking into the kind, round face. "I must go home," she said, "Mother would worry. Oh, I am sorry she could not come—sorry—sorry!"

At the door of the church they waited for the Curate to come out. The girl turned to her companion with a frank smile. "It was beautiful!" she said, "I thank you."

The round face lighted. "You are glad you came?"

"I shall never forget it." She broke off with a pretty gesture—"Oh, *could* I see him, just once, do you think? I want to tell him how I loved it!"

The Curate's wife looked stern. "You *loved* it!"

"Didn't you? It was so strange and sweet. I wanted to clap and clap and cry—why did no one clap?" she demanded, "a voice like that!"

"You mean—," a light glimmered—"you mean the choir, the singing?"

"I mean that boy with a voice like an angel! Why, in the theatre they would not have let him go—not a sound—I could have cried—my throat ached so!" She put her hand to it, still pulsing.

The Curate's wife relaxed a little. "We do not applaud in church; we go to worship God."

"I think God was pleased," said the girl simply; "It must have reached Him; it went so high! Oh, could I see him, do you think? I must see him. *I must!*"

The Curate's wife was startled. "See God?"

The girl's laugh rippled a little. "The boy that sang."

"Oh, Jimmie Barlow!" Her brow cleared. "Of course; he is a nice boy; he has a good mother; I will bring him to see you."

The girl seized her hand, pressing it in both her own and swinging it a little. "Bring him to the theatre," she said, "to-morrow night—will you?"

The Curate had come up. His wife breathed a sigh of relief as she turned to him. "She wants us to bring Jimmie Barlow to see her act, George. Do you think we could?"

The Curate was looking at the girl kindly—at the light in her face and the eager, moving hands and swift impatience—"Why not?" he said slowly, "Why not?—the boy would like it."

With a little gesture of thanks the girl was gone.

The Curate looked at his wife. His wife was looking at him.

"It's all right," he said easily, "every one in town has been, apparently, except you and me,—and Jimmie Barlow."

"It isn't that. It's Jimmie."

The Curate stared a little.

"I mean," she wrinkled her brow, "He's only a boy and,—did you see her face?"

The Curate laughed. "The boy is sixteen, seventeen almost; we lose him from the choir in May; she will not hurt him." He made a little gesture. "I should like him to know a nice girl."

"You are sure she is nice?" The anxious brow confronted him.

"As sure as that you are, my dear; I do not make mistakes in women."

"Oh, George," very softly, "George—George!" It was all that was said.

III

The girl broke in with swift breath. She crossed to the grey figure on the couch and dropped beside it on her knees. "I have seen an angel," she said. Her voice sang a little. Her eyes danced. Her hands laughed, and were still. They smoothed the grey hair. "It was a truly angel," she said, "in a white robe,—singing."

Her mother smiled, a look of relief in her face. "It was not the Curate then?"

"The Curate? Oh, dear, no! It was a real angel, with wings, I think, though I didn't see 'em. And he stood in the light and sang, and a great bird came and waited above him and sang, 'Amen, Amen.'"

She threw back her head, breathing the words softly. The clear flute call filled the room, dying in little waves. The girl listened to the sound, smiling as it died away. The clear, fresh look in her face held a child's happiness, with something deeper behind it.

Her mother watched it intently. "Tell me about it," she said. She reached for the quick moving hands and patted them. "Tell me."

"That's all," said the girl, "but his name is Jimmie Barlow and I love him; and he is coming to see me and—"

"They lived happy forever after." A little shadow fell on the words.

The girl laughed out, softly. "But they did."

"Hush, child!" The mother's hand closed firmly on the flitting one. "It is only a dream."

They sat in silence, the dream about them—the grey mother looking back to a passion of youth. Out of the Quaker past she saw her life emerge, and break and waste itself. The riot and color and passion had ebbed to grey . . . her child should not know wreck. She had watched with jealous breath. The soul of her child had run free beside her. At the first stirring of unrest the door had been set ajar to wings. They had opened and fluttered. They waited now, poised—child—woman—a mystery that laughed and sang and spent itself. The mother's clasp tightened a little. The test was come early to quick blood. Her eyes probed the future. Was it to be again?—the swift outgoing, the saddened return? No help from her who knew so well the way, how it beckoned, mysterious, with gleams of rose and quick, soft grass for speeding feet. . . . They had dealt harsh blows to her—pitiless. They had driven her out of their grey world. Her child had come to the same place,—too soon.

The girl held the thin fingers, spreading them lightly in her own. There were no rings to break the thin lines or hide the whiteness. She held them to her lips, breathing on them. "They are cold," she said.

IV

The theatre was crowded, but the boy saw only the stage and the girl who had wanted him to come. How beautiful she was—with her strange face. Something stirred in him. He waited, holding his breath—youth on tiptoe—life with finger on lip.

The Curate touched his wife; their eyes met; hers held foreboding; his own were lighted with gentle pleasure; she shook her head at them, and glanced at the boy; he had not stirred. A swift smile held his lips—the smile that crosses a dream, flitting and wistful and vague.

She shook her head again. She looked reproachfully at George. George had returned to the stage.

The girl entered the box with a little flutter of feathers. The boy awoke from his dream. She approached him with gentle mien. The Curate's wife had turned, but something in the two faces stayed her. They were looking into each other clearly—as two souls that meet midway from the world to world. The girl spoke first, in a quick, low voice, "Will you come and see me?"

"Yes," he breathed the word. His eyes had not left her face.

A smile broke its gravity. It called the little lights to her eyes. Her hands moved swiftly. "Come to dinner with me, to-morrow night—all of you?" She had turned to the Curate and his wife, "I want you all." It was as much a command as a request.

The Curate bowed. His wife opened her lips. The girl laid a finger on them lightly. Her eyes were on the boy's face. "I shall expect you, at six—I must go now. Mother will be waiting. She could not come to-night—Thank you for coming. Thank you!" In the midst of a shower of quick little nods she was gone.

It was not yet dark in the dining-room. But candles were lighted. The girl moved about, adjusting the shades and giving a final touch to the flowers. There were lilies in the room, and roses and violets. The air would have been heavy with the fragrance had it not been for the long windows, opened to the balcony outside, and the little breeze that came in, stirring the curtains. The girl lingered, looking about her in a dream. She wore a shimmering gown, soft and iridescent, shining as she turned her throat in the light. She held herself, listening. The handle had turned. It was her mother—a grey presence in the beating room. She ran to her swiftly. "You are well enough to come down! I am glad—glad!" She was watching the pale face. "You must not stand." She had pushed forward a chair.

Her mother laid a hand on the back of it. But she did not sit down; she stood looking about the fragrant room. "You have made it beautiful," she said.

"Isn't it! They changed the table—gave me the round one, and took down those ugly things"—she motioned to the curtains. "The rest was easy."

"I see." Her eyes lingered on the girl. "You are almost grown up," she said softly.

"Yes?" The girl's voice rose to a little questioning note. "I do not feel so. I feel like a child. I am so happy!" She had come close to her mother. She took the thin fingers, pressing them to her lips.

A sigh escaped into the room—a breath among the flowers.

The girl turned quickly. "You are tired. We will rest till they come." She put an arm about the grey figure and they passed from the room.

Half an hour later the curious dinner party was gathered about the table. The eyes of the boy and girl met through a tangle of light and flowers and flame. Above the table a mote of flame was caught in a crystal ball and hung swinging, its heart of rose shimmering through. A murmur of sound moved in and out across the light that seemed to centre in the boy and girl. The Curate's wife spoke little. She found herself thinking of the time she first saw George. Her eyes rested on his gently as she remembered. He had been standing in a crowd—she had not thought of it for years—it was on the street corner, and raining, and he had looked at her and a soft, shining light had spread about them mistily. . . . She looked from the boy to the girl. They had been hardly older—she and George. People had called them foolish. But she would not have changed it—not a minute of it. All the hard times and the easy ones had grown out of it—that moment of pulsing light. Her eyes met those of the mother across the table. A look of understanding passed between them and was gone.

By and by they rose from the table. The boy stood by the window where the breeze from behind the curtain touched his face. The others had moved a little apart. The girl crossed to the window. Slowly she faced him, the leaden fringes that weighed her eyelids lifting themselves. The boy looked into the eyes. The silence waited. Out of it he reached to her—a boyish smile curving his lips. He did not touch her. It was hardly a gesture. Pan, the god of green things walked the room. His wings struck the fragrant air to light.

"I am going away to-morrow," she said.

"But you come back?"

"Sometime. Yes."

There was silence. Above the table the swinging ball held its prisoned flame. They moved back and joined the others.

The Curate's wife held out her hand. "Good-night, children," she said, "You have to go and rehearse, both of you, and George is going, but we mothers—" she looked again at the other woman, "We can sit awhile and talk."

They passed out of the room—all of them. The silence behind them pulsed, and grew still. The curtains stirred in the wind. A breath, as of wings, spread itself. It hovered above the flowers.

Two black-coated figures came in. One by one, they went about, putting out the lights till the room was dark. Only above the table the mote of flame glowed in its crystal ball.

IN THE MATTER OF THE PRINTING STEAL

By William MacLeod Raine



"SAY, mister."

The young man behind the desk looked up from his work and nodded.

"You the clerk of the county court?"

Jackson admitted it, whereupon the boy slammed down his big parcel of blanks, took a receipt, and left.

"Here, this bill goes to the county commissioners' office," Jackson shouted after the boy. But Young America was already out of earshot on a rush for the descending elevator.

"I suppose I'll have to take it down," grumbled the clerk, as he looked at the bill without curiosity.

The figures totaled at the bottom of the column caught and held his eyes. They seemed to have an odd fascination for him. For a long minute he stared at the \$311.26 written there. Then his lips pursed for a whistle, but no sound issued from them. He opened the package the boy had left, and carefully compared its contents item by item with the bill. They tallied exactly.

"You've uncovered a steal, Tom Jackson," he told himself. "Now, be careful, my boy. You want to go slow or you'll euchre yourself out of a job."

He sat down and did ten minutes' hard thinking. Then he rose and stepped across to the chambers of Judge Tresham. He had decided to shift the responsibility of a decision to broader shoulders than his.

"Judge, I've got something I want to show you. It's a bill for some legal blanks that the printer's boy just brought to the office and left by mistake. There are about twenty dollars' worth of blank forms in the bundle. The bill is for \$311.26."

"It must be a mistake, Tom."

"Perhaps it is, and yet I don't see how it can be. You see the items foot up right."

The judge ran his eye down the bill.

"If it is not a mistake it means that there is a big steal going on in the commissioners' office," said the judge slowly.

"Yes, sir. That's how it looks to me."

James Tresham was of the old-fashioned type of lawyer that modern conditions are fast making impossible. He had just passed the half-century mark, but had hitherto conserved the old standard of personal honor that the business world of to-day is wiping out. His reputation among the people for honesty was general, and even his political associates had long since stopped expecting him to be serviceable in the ordinary dubious party deals. He held his place by their sufferance only because his accepted integrity was a more valuable asset as a vote-winner than trickery.

He worked out a decision silently, then issued orders to Jackson.

"Take down to the commissioners' office our record of the supplies furnished us during the last three months. Under some pretext compare them with the bills of the same date and bring me a copy of the amount of the bills. Don't say anything about this matter. Let the clerks suppose you have neglected to check some goods and want to learn the data concerning them."

Jackson returned two hours later. "It's worse than I supposed, judge. We've unearthed the edges of a big steal. The county is being robbed right and left. I have run across hardly a single item of supplies that is not crooked. It's this way, judge. The contract under which supplies are bought is worded so as to leave the commissioners' office an option every time as to prices and quantities. One option is very low, so as to secure the county printing for Roberts & Anderson's bid; the other option is twenty times as high. In each case the commissioners have ordered goods under the second option."

"I don't think I quite understand, Tom."

"Well, look at this, for instance. Take index-books. First option: designation, F 113; quantity, one; size in pages, 26; weight of paper, 40 pounds medium; quality, J.W.L.R.; price, \$12. Second option: same description exactly except that there are 52 pages; price, \$1. Under that schedule the county ordered fifty index-books of 26 pages, paying six hundred dollars for them, while it could have ordered one-half the number of twice the size, otherwise exactly alike, and paid only twenty-five dollars for them. The county lost five hundred and seventy-five dollars by that deal, and that's how it goes all down the line. Here are their signatures where the commissioners have O.K.'d the bills. Savage, Morley, Wallace, O'Brien, and Benson; all their names there, you see."

Judge Tresham examined the figures carefully till doubt was no longer possible. He dropped the papers on his desk with a gesture almost of despair.

"Just leave those here, Tom. I want to look into them to-night. It looks like a wretched business. We'll have to find a way out some-

how. Be sure not to say anything about them to anybody—remember, not to anybody,” cautioned the judge.

Jackson promised, and left the judge alone with his problem. To say that Tresham was almost sick with apprehension is not to exaggerate his condition. His party had been eager in promises of a clean administration—and this was the result. At least four of the commissioners were pleasant casual acquaintances of his, and Wallace and Morley were a good deal more. He had stumped the county once with Wallace and had slept in the same bed with him for a week. They belonged to the same club. Their families met at the same houses occasionally.

And Morley—why, he and Bob Morley used to be like brothers. They had been at college together. Until late years it had been a regular thing for the Treshams to eat Thanksgiving dinner at the Morley house and for Bob's family to spend Christmas Day with them. The Morley children called him Uncle Jim. He remembered that one brown-eyed youngster had shouted it across to him that very morning on his way to chambers.

Lately he and Morley seemed to have drifted apart somewhat. He recalled now that they had not been out to lunch together for a long time. The family relations, too, though always cordial, had not been so intimate. He had supposed this due to the fact that the Morleys, who had begun to go out socially and to entertain a good deal, had less leisure on their hands. Getting into society had apparently been rather an expensive affair for Bob, judging by his style of living now. Tresham had sometimes wondered how he could meet his bills, but he had never questioned Morley's honesty.

Now he understood. The figures on the paper before him damned Morley beyond hope. He was a grafter at the expense of the public. Tresham groaned aloud at his friend's faithlessness and at the hard luck that had brought upon him the ordeal of exposing it. For, though he sought desperately for another way out, he could see none that shaped with his plain duty.

At lodge that night Tresham drew aside a friend of his, an older man, now serving as federal judge of the district. He stated the case guardedly and asked for advice. Bates was both an honest man and a shrewd politician. He considered the circumstances judicially and gave an opinion.

“Don't know anything about it, Tresham. You are not called on to interfere. It is not your business. Don't let yourself get mixed up in it. You're a useful man to the state. I want to see you on the supreme bench. You can do great good there. But if you expose these politicians they will spoil your career. You will be a disappointed,

disgruntled outsider, and everybody will point to you as a fool failure who didn't know how to hold his tongue. I'm an older man than you. I know that a man has to choose the lesser evil sometimes."

Tresham was not satisfied. "Still, Bates, to connive at a steal for reasons partly selfish is not honorable. I can't make it seem right."

"You won't be conniving at it. You'll simply be one of the helpless victims. Don't ruin yourself out of Quixotry, Tresham," advised his friend bluntly.

Tresham lay awake all night. He knew that he was at the parting of the ways. His hopes of being a justice of the supreme court must be sacrificed forever if he persisted in his course. So much was certain. And none knew how dear to him was the honest ambition to sit as a member of that court. It offered a competence and some measure of leisure for his declining years. He had a family of growing youngsters to be educated. He was out of touch with active practice as a lawyer. He would have a hard fight to hold his own against the younger men if he had to hang out his shingle again. But he felt that he could do it if he must.

He sent for Morley next morning before court met. The commissioner came into chambers and up to Tresham's desk with an eager friendliness that cut the judge like the stroke of a switch across the face. There had always been something tender and winning in Morley's smile. To-day it was unusually attractive.

"How are you, Jim?" he began, in his warm way. "It's a long time since——. Why, what's the matter, man?" Morley stepped forward quickly and laid an affectionate arm across Tresham's shoulder. "No bad news, is there?"

Tresham averted his eyes. A horrible shame possessed him at being a witness of the first moments of Morley's disgrace. He blindly shoved Jackson's figures toward his friend. When he looked again the commissioner was staring at them with a face white as the paper.

"So you are a spy," he almost whispered between set teeth.

"No, I'm merely an honest man. Can you say that, Bob?" the judge demanded suddenly.

The color swept back with a surge into Morley's face. "By ——, if you dare say I'm not——"

"I shall not say it unless it is true," answered Tresham steadily.

"What business is the commissioners' office of yours?" burst out Morley, in a rage. "You find some figures you don't understand and you go sneaking around to prove me a thief. I thought you called yourself my friend."

"I do, Bob. That's why I've sent for you alone, to give you a

chance to explain before I turn these figures over to the district attorney."

"You daren't turn them over," flung back the other, fear and anger battling in his face.

"I must. I can do nothing else, Bob."

"You mind your own business, Tresham," said the commissioner, threatening bluntly. "You run your court and we'll run the commissioners' office. I warn you to keep your meddling fingers out of our affairs or it will be the worse for you;" and he turned on his heel and left the room.

The county commissioners were hurriedly called together by telephone for a conference behind locked doors. It was a stormy meeting, and only a partial report of what occurred there leaked out. Old jealousies came to the surface in mutual recriminations. "I told you so's" were as frequent as telegraph-poles on a railway journey. Only Morley and O'Brien had been "next" on the printing steal, and Benson intimated that they might get out as best they could.

O'Brien turned, snarling on him like a fox at bay. "Is that so? Ye'r like a pack of rats ready to leave a sinkin' ship. But you'll listen to a word from me. What about the bridge graft, Mr. Benson? And what about the park supplies graft, you other gentlemen? D'ye really think we'll stand to be the scape-goats, and let you go scot-free? Not if the court knows itself. We had our graft and you had yours. Now ye'll stand by us to the finish or down you come too."

Wallace broke in, perspiration standing moist on his brow. "Gentlemen, we're not going at this the right way. We must stand together. We must get at Tresham and shut him up. He's not a bad fellow, but he's liable to go off half-cocked. We must show him that it's for the good of the party, with an election only six months away, that this be kept quiet."

Savage slapped his thigh. "That's right, Tom. We've got him to rights there. If he wants a renomination he's got to stand by the party."

"He wants a renomination all right," put in Wallace. "It was only last week he was telling me that his heart was set on getting through the next legislature a bill for straightening out the probate law tangle. He's working on it day and night."

O'Brien rose with a laugh. "I guess we'll find Tresham's bark worse than his bite. He'll shut his tongue between his teeth, that's what he'll do. We'll turn Mike Maloney loose on him, boys."

Benson nodded. "He'll give way before the pressure on him. He'll learn a man can't throw his party down."

They lost no time in massing their influence and bringing it to bear on Tresham. Leading politicians dropped in during the day and talked with the judge. They warned him that the course he proposed to follow would be political suicide, that no man was big enough to throw down his party with impunity.

Tresham pleaded that he did not want to throw down his party, that if the party leaders vigorously exposed and denounced graft in the party ranks it would be stronger than ever with the people. The wise politicians shook their heads and said that wasn't politics. Some of them grew bitter and among themselves called him an ingrate and a traitor. Tresham, fighting desperately for his self-respect, endured their shallow contempt sadly.

When the afternoon session of court had adjourned, Dines Allison came in to see the judge. Now, Dines Allison was a corporation attorney who thought himself, and was held to be, an honest man. He would have neither offered nor accepted a direct bribe, though he had been in deals where he had suspected the use of "influence money" by others to further his ends. It had been the backing of Allison that had put Tresham on the bench. Since then they had always been on the best of terms. Therefore the judge, knowing why he had come, sickened at sight of his friend's handsome, clean-cut, powerful face.

"Judge, you know it was my influence with Maloney that secured you the nomination for judge of the superior court four years ago. I've argued a hundred cases before you since. Have I ever presumed on that fact?"

"Never," answered Tresham promptly.

"Well, I'm not going to presume on it now. But I'm going to ask you for your own sake to go slow in this commissioner-exposure business."

The judge passed his hand wearily across his eyes. "I've gone over it again and again, Allison. I don't see what else I can do but turn the matter over to the district attorney. The thing is a plain steal."

"What good will it do? The district attorney is a part of the machine. He'll have to screen them from punishment."

"I shall have done my duty."

"You will have ruined yourself and accomplished nothing."

"I can't help that."

"I don't see why you need know anything about it, Tresham. You're not a thief-catcher by profession. What business is it of yours whether the commissioners are grafting?"

"That's a quibble, Allison. I'm a citizen, am I not? Shall I sit down and fold my hands while the public that pays me is robbed?"

"The public does not pay you to audit the accounts of the different county offices. You can't right every wrong. You're doing enough if you attend to those that are brought into your court. To be frank, I don't see how you can afford to touch this affair. Next month the nominating convention meets. The machine will throw you out and you'll be done for. That's one side of it. Now, if you keep quiet about this, you'll be re-elected to straighten out that probate law, and next year you'll surely be elected judge of the Supreme Court. If you are foolish now you absolutely destroy your chance of future usefulness to the people. It seems to me that your duty is to be silent. You must remember, judge, that a man can't carry all the burdens of the world on his shoulders. He has to take a broad view of things. Think about it again, Tresham."

The judge did not need to think again in order to know that the commissioners had served notice on him as to how they expected him to act.

Hard on the heels of Allison came Maloney, boss of the city by right of absorption. He was a big man of his kind, and had worried his way to the front by unflinching courage and by sheer masterful power. He rode over his subjects like a shah.

"What's this damned nonsense the boys are telling me about you and the commissioners, Tresham?" he demanded.

Judge Tresham flushed. "I don't understand you, Mr. Maloney."

"Oh yes, you do. I call a spade a spade. I'm not going to have any fighting inside the party now, with the elections coming on. Understand? It's not square of you, Tresham. If you want to make a grandstand play after the election, you can turn loose then. I shan't kick at that. But you cut it out now."

Tresham's clear eyes met Maloney's bull-dog glance steadily. "I'm going to do my duty."

Out shot Mike Maloney's square chin. "You can't play that game with me. I'll break you in two. There won't be enough of you left politically to bury. You take your orders from me, Mr. Judge Tresham. Understand?"

Tresham walked to the door and flung it open. "You may go, Mr. Maloney. You have made a mistake. I don't take orders from you."

The boss went, too amazed to protest, dazed by the moral dignity of this anachronism—one of the creatures he had made flinging himself before the Juggernaut of politics on account of a conscience!

Tresham carried his fight home that night and found another phase of it waiting for him there. His wife met him in the hall, a repressed triumph patent in her manner.

"You are tired, dear," she said, when she caught sight of his face, and she hovered about him in maternal fashion, helping him off with his coat and gloves.

"Well, I am," he admitted.

"And troubled," she added. "Have you had a hard case to-day?"

"We'll let that wait, Kate," he smiled. "Now for your news."

"It's about the girls. Kate and Mary have been asked to Nellie Allison's coming-out party. I'm so glad for them. It establishes their position in society so definitely, and the Allison's never have asked them before. I don't care about going out myself, Jim, but I do want the girls to get the best," fluttered the little mother.

Tresham put his arm about her and drew her into the library. He shut the door, then sat down on the arm of the Morris chair where he had put her. She noticed that his strange face was clouded.

"Kate, I'm sorry,—you don't know how sorry I am,—but you must send regrets."

"Why, Jim!" Protest was in her voice, and keen disappointment.

Simply and barely he told her the story of his fight for clean politics. She listened silently, asking a question once or twice when some point was not clear. His voice was quite even, quite without emotion; but he knew that vital issues rested in the balance. If she failed him now, he stood alone in his day of trouble; if she understood he would know that he had found beyond fear of loss the greatest good in life.

He finished, waiting for her to speak, while the clock ticked the long seconds away. At her first words his heart fell. She was still thinking, then, of her petty disappointment, not of his fight for honor.

"And so this invitation for the girls was sent as a kind of hush-money to you?" she said tremblingly. "Not because they wanted them to come for themselves?"

"I suppose I was in Allison's mind a good deal. He probably thought we would be pleased, and suggested to his wife to send an invitation. Undoubtedly he hoped it would influence me," explained Tresham mechanically.

She put up her hand and pulled his head down. His grizzled temples had never looked so gray to her before. She kissed him and laid her cheek against his with a sudden rush of love.

"They're all against you," she cried passionately. "You're worth all of them put together. You're clean and brave and unselfish. But they can't do you any real harm. They can't make you like themselves. What do we care about their bribes? You are going to do what's right, Jim, aren't you?"

The relief was so great that tears leaped to his eyes. A long,

uneven breath shook him. He lifted his head and looked away across her shoulder. He was saying to himself softly, "Thank God! Thank God!"

But the god from the machine sometimes slips a cog, and there is nothing more impotent than a political machine out of running order. The exposure of the printing steal came on the public like a bolt from a clear sky. The newspapers took it up and played it in red scare head-lines with Tresham as the hero. Covert accusations were made against him, and Judge Tresham answered them with a frank letter to the people that won them by thousands. If he were an outlaw among the politicians, he was for the moment a power with the public.

The district attorney shilly-shallied, and meanwhile the nominating conventions met. It leaked out that Tresham's name was not on the slate of his own party ticket. There was a popular outburst of indignation. The opposition party nominated him in a shrewd attempt to catch votes. Maloney, fighting with his back to the wall for votes, had to break his own slate to make room for the man he hated. Indorsed by both parties, Tresham's election was made almost unanimous, and his consequent prestige so great as to insure his elevation to the vacancy in the Supreme Court a few months later.

But a political crisis prevented this. A reform campaign was in the air. Out with its lantern in search of an honest man, the public found him in James Tresham. He was nominated for governor by one of the dramatic surprises of a stampeded convention, and was later elected by an overwhelming majority.

And Tom Jackson was not forgotten.



STRAWS IN THE WIND

A shady past usually precludes a sunny future.

Everybody's drinking habits are of interest to his neighbors.

An optimist is a man who underestimates his sorrows and over-values his joys.

Clever folk are apt to show their stupidity in not appreciating the cleverness of stupid people.—WARWICK JAMES PRICE.

THE METHOD OF CROSS-EYED MOSES

By Marvin Dana



I HAD thought it hot in Missouri; I realized my mistake when I got to Kansas, for that summer the plains were one long torrid torment.

Besides, in Missouri I had had a little money; in Kansas I had none. Money will assuage, to some extent, the sufferings of almost any situation, and now I was without a penny.

My one relief was the distraction offered by Moses' eyes. Our mutual misfortune as to funds drew us together the first day we met in the rude village that afterwards developed into Topeka, and at once I found a weird fascination in those eyes. Moses was the most cross-eyed man I ever saw. His protruding blue orbs were miracles of askewness. Though I studied him for many a day, I never succeeded in fathoming their mystery: in other words, I never had the slightest idea as to what he was looking at, unless he told me. There was no use in trying to follow his gaze; the differential calculus would not have sufficed to figure out its direction. It was always everywhere in general and nowhere in particular, or *vice versa*. I am thus emphatic in reference to Moses' eyes because their peculiarity helped to save us in a crisis.

One day, when I was hungry and hopeless as usual, Moses spoke forlornly:

"It's the bones for us, Waite."

At first I misunderstood him. I thought that he was making a ghastly joke as to all that would be left of us soon. But his next words undeceived me:

"It's the devil's own work in this heat, but it's sure money. I heard Big Mike saying he had a market for all he could get. He'd let us have a wagon and oxen."

"You mean, we're to go bone-gathering?" I asked.

"That's it," Moses replied. Then silence fell on us.

At that period in the history of Kansas, bones in abundance were strewn over the prairies, relics of herds caught in the relentless clutch

of winter blizzards or summer drouths, and, too, of the innumerable single victims of the inevitable death.

Big Mike, who ran the largest saloon in the town, was always ready for any business venture that offered a quick profit, and the opportunity for traffic in these bones had appealed to him. Already he had dealt in them, and had shipped several carloads gathered for him by the impecunious. Now, we found him ready to make us a liberal offer. He agreed to provide us with a wagon and oxen, and to give us board and lodging during the period of the work, with a cash payment for the lot when we were done. The payment, two hundred and fifty dollars, would be due only when we had collected the number of carloads required.

These preliminaries completed, we began the work. For weeks we lived through the same monotonous drudgery of suffering day after day. We drove the lumbering, patient yoke of oxen afar over the prairie, loaded the great wagon with a motley assortment of bones; then, as evening drew on, returned to the town, and unloaded the mass on the ground beside the railroad track at the freight station. Often it was midnight before we had finished our labors. But, be the hour what it might, we were again astir by four in the morning.

"Another week'll finish it," Big Mike had said, at last, after an inspection.

Now that week had passed. It was eight o'clock on Saturday night, and we had just returned to our lodging after unloading the last of the bones.

I had completed my toilet, which consisted of a bath and putting on again the clothes I had taken off. Moses, who had stopped for a pipe before changing in like manner, called to me:

"I say, Waite!"

"Well, what is it?" I asked.

"You slip over to Mike's and get our money," Moses directed. "By the time you're back I'll be ready, and then we can catch the train going east."

"All right," I agreed.

I put on my hat, lighted my pipe, and set forth for the saloon. Tired as I was, the object of the walk winged my feet. At last, after all the days of anguish, I was to win my reward. I was about to have in my hands two hundred and fifty dollars,—one hundred and twenty-five of it for myself alone, my own. Heavens, the rapture of that thought! None can imagine it unless, like me, he had been penniless for months. For how many weary hours had the hope of that money been my only solace! Now that hope was to be realized. It was with eager feet and happy heart that I went on my way towards Big Mike's.

There was the usual Saturday crowd in the saloon when I entered. A long line of thirsty men touched elbows at the bar, behind which the proprietor and his single helper were hurrying to and fro in anxious effort to satisfy all demands. I made my way to that end of the bar nearer Big Mike, and awaited an opportunity to attract his attention.

Presently he came close to me, and I spoke to him.

He turned at once, and answered sharply:

"What is it? Hurry up. I'm busy."

I was angered at his tone, but I have learned not to take offence needlessly. I replied quietly:

"I've come for the money for the bones. We want to get the train east."

Big Mike came a little closer to me. There was a savage scowl on his face.

"Say that again," he cried.

I grew angry at that, angry and vaguely alarmed. But I restrained myself from any display of emotion, and repeated my statement.

"I've come for the money for the bones for Moses and me,—two hundred and fifty dollars."

By this time the crowd in the bar had fallen silent; every man was peering and listening. On me, even as I spoke, an unutterable dread descended—a dread as awful as my hope had been high.

Big Mike thrust his face at me, and it was red with fury.

"Get out, you!" he roared. "Don't try any of your games on me. Get out!" And he added a string of curses.

"Games!" I repeated, helplessly, for my head was whirling. "But I want our money for getting the bones."

Big Mike broke in on me:

"Your money!" he shouted. "I don't pay twice, young man. I've paid your money to you once, and that's enough!" He cursed me again, long and foully.

"Where's your receipt?" I demanded, goaded to rage. "Where's your receipt, you liar?"

"Right there, sonny!"

I found myself looking into the barrel of a huge Colt's that Big Mike had drawn from beneath the bar.

"Throw up your hands!" he commanded. "I reckon this is about all the receipt I need with your sort."

Instinctively I had obeyed his order, and now, as I reflected for a moment, I saw how desperate was my case. For the moment, at least, I had no means of redress. The man was in his own place,

surrounded by friends, admirers, dependants; my life was at the mercy of his finger-touch on the trigger. I had no choice but to submit.

"Turn around and walk out of here," he bade me. "And keep your hands up!"

Trembling with mingled wrath, shame, and despair, I stumbled from the place.

Once outside, I set forth on a run for our lodgings, to rehearse my tale of disaster to the waiting Moses.

My appearance at once prepared him for evil tidings, and he listened to me without signs of great emotion.

"I didn't think he was that sort," was the sole comment, when at last I paused for lack of breath.

Then he fell into a brown study, while I sat panting and staring at him. But after a little he suddenly sprang to his feet. He drew his tall gaunt form erect, and his eyes flashed.

"We've earned that money," he said softly, but with a curious sternness in his voice, "and we're going to have it!"

I leaped up in my turn, but a motion of his hand checked the words on my lips.

"No, Waite, I ain't going to tell you anything except just what you've got to do. But what I do tell you, you've got to do right on the nail. Understand?" His two eyes seemed staring at everything in the room except me, but I knew that he must be looking at me, so I merely nodded an assent.

"The clock down-stairs has just struck nine," Moses continued. "At nine-twenty the train east is due, and it's usually on time. You just hustle back to Big Mike's, go in, and up to the bar, and tell him you've come for that two hundred and fifty."

"But—" I began.

"Don't talk," Moses interrupted. "When he gives you the money, chase yourself to the depot lickety-split for that train. You've got to catch it. I'll meet you there."

"But he won't give me the money," I objected.

"Never you mind about that," Moses retorted, "You do as I say. That's my part of the business. Come on. I'm going 'most there with you."

Still distraught, I hastened at his side towards the saloon; but now a faint hope was growing in me, born of the grim determination in the man's words and manner.

A rod or so from the door of Big Mike's place, Moses stopped me.

"Wait here while you count a hundred slowly," he directed. "That 'll give me time enough. Then walk in and up to the bar,

and ask for the money—right out loud, too. When you have your paw on it, hustle for the depot.”

With that, Moses whirled and vanished into the shadows between the buildings. Wondering mightily, I remained where he had left me and counted slowly from one up to a hundred. Then I took a deep breath and hurried forward.

The saloon was more crowded even than before, more clouded with tobacco-smoke, and none took heed of me as I pushed open the door and crossed to the bar. I reached it and leaned against it, quite unobserved. Big Mike was in the centre of the open place behind the bar, taking change from the money-drawer. His back was turned to me, as I called out to him in my loudest voice. A desperate bravado possessed me, and I spoke in stern command.

“I’ve come again for that two hundred and fifty dollars; hand it over!”

Sudden silence fell. Big Mike whirled and faced me, his mouth half-open in genuine amazement at my daring. But thus only for an instant; then the blood flamed in his face and he glared at me.

“Why, you damned little fool,” he roared, “I told you not to come here again. I’ll bore—”

He had whirled, and would have reached under the bar, but he was startled from his purpose by a great crash. By a common instinct all turned to look in the direction of the sound.

We heard and saw a rain of splintered glass from a window set high in the back wall of the saloon, made thus aloft in order to clear a low out-house in the rear. Through the shattered window-frame leaned the lank body of Moses, and in his hands two forty-fours circled slowly.

“Up with your hands, Big Mike!” came the ringing cry, and the saloon-keeper’s arms shot upward.

“Up with your hands—you!—and you!— and you! *I’ve got my eye on you!*”

Every man stood with hands held high.

“Remember, *I’ve got my eye on you!*” repeated the ominous voice; and every man in the room believed with all his heart that he was the one to whom Moses particularly spoke his threat, and each cowered in dread of the deadly circling muzzles.

For, indeed, the eyes of Moses perched aloft seemed everywhere. Huge, blazing, those mismated orbs darted here and there, and no man knew the object of their malevolent stare.

“Turn around, Big Mike,” the cold command came, “and be quick about it.” The voice waxed more savage. “Take your right hand down, but keep it in sight—unless you want a bullet through

you. Reach that hand into your money-drawer, and count out two hundred and fifty dollars. *I've got my eye on you!*"

Humbly, the burly villain obeyed. In a moment he had laid out a heap of five- and ten- dollar bills. I kept the tale of them as he counted them, and I knew that the amount was correct.

"Hand them to Waite, there," came the harsh order, and again Big Mike obeyed.

"Hands up!" snapped Moses, and Big Mike's right arm was vertical again.

As for me, I obeyed orders, and got out of the saloon within a second from the time my fingers touched the money. I could hear the train rolling into the station as I jumped into the street. At the sound I thrust the bills into my breast-pocket and set off at top speed. The station was an eighth of a mile away, and I dare swear I made it in less than thirty seconds.

As I reached the platform the train was just moving out. I caught wildly at a passing hand-rail; some one grasped me by the coat-collar, and I was hauled aboard. As I entered the car, I saw Moses advancing towards me from the other end.

"And just to think," Moses remarked an hour later, while the train rolled swiftly eastward. "I almost sold those forty-fours once, when I was starving."



DUST

BY EDWARD S. PETERSON

I HOLD a red glass of gray dust
 Blown far from foreign lands.
 Who knows? Was this a peasant's heart,
 Or just a great king's hands?

Was it a poppy, or a rose?
 A lion's tongue or paw?
 Was it a law unto itself,
 Or under human law?

Who knows? Dust tells no tales. And yet,
 If I disturb it much,
 Perhaps some far, unmated soul,
 Somehow, will know my touch.

IN PORT

BY HELEN O'SULLIVAN DIXON

WIND of the south, blow
Your tenderest!
My young love lies dead—

Lies low—low—low.
Narcisse and fern I bring,
Moss, and every thing
That once as sweet
We knew;—and violet!
To bind about his head
That he should not forget.
Arbutus, too!
And maiden hair
Strong as fair,
Melting with dew,

Sky, let fall your bars of fire!
To light the way
Across the sullen sea
And dark!
Whose destiny
Is to bear
The freighted bark
From me
At fall of day.

Oh star of the night!
Guide the flight
Of this mute weight
Beyond the border-line
Of my listening soul!
Tell me if, when there,
At the shore
Of the jasper sea,
Seraphim, and Cherubim
Cry:—Hail! all Hail! Sleeping Heart!!!

Hark! methinks I hear the tide—
My boat hath gained the other side—
My love is in Port!

LADY MARY'S ELOPEMENT

By Elizabeth Hovey-King



IN old Hall Born, skeletons grinned in numerous closets, but for these Lady Mary cared naught because her heart was filled with other things and her eyes were turned in other ways.

The rose garden was where she loved to stray, for there the tall stems seemed always to bend and the glorious blooms to bow before her; but the hand that beckoned her did not show itself until she passed with glowing eyes beyond the nodding stems and bowing roses, although she knew loving eyes were watching as she sped to the foot of the garden where the high stone wall shut off a tangled ravine.

In the midst of the ivy that covered the wall a narrow gate was almost lost, and rumor said it had never been opened since the young Lord and heir—many generations back—had passed through and taken the key with him. Neither he nor the key had ever been heard of, and the gate in the wall had remained closed—and the skeleton in his closet had ever been hidden.

But when Lady Mary passed through the rose garden and found her way to the narrow gate it swung back as if she possessed the magic open sesame in her blue eyes, and as it closed behind her a pair of strong arms held her and a pair of warm lips saluted her, and as the two sank side by side on a projection of the old stone wall, a low and musical voice murmured:

"I thought you would never come, Lady Mary," and he kissed her again.

"Why will you persist in ladying me? Have I not told you—stop, now, will you?" and she pushed his mouth away, "Have I not told you as many times as you have seen me to call me Mary only?"

"So you have. So you have. And so you are my Lady, and so you are my Mary only, and only my Mary, and only my Lady, and the two must go together—thus you are ever my Lady Mary—" and he ended by kissing her again.

"You never tell me what I most want to know, Felix?" whispered Lady Mary as she pushed his face from her.

"I am always telling you it. I am ever telling you, and I am now telling you and you will listen. I love you, Lady Mary! I adore you, I worship you, I—"

"None but an Irish—"

"I have repeatedly told you I am not Irish."

"You act Irish, leastways, all you do is Irish. Now what I most want to know is: Where did you find that key? It is bright, bright as if it had been always in use—and tradition says there was never but one key to that lock, and never a locksmith who could fit a duplicate—and that my ancient cousin—by several removes—and the Lord of old Hall Born, carried his key away with him; and tradition says more, that: When the key is found, so, also, will be found the rightful heir of those broad domains. My line of the house has ever lived here as usurpers and interlopers in the eyes of the shire folks—" But her mouth was shut again with a kiss. "Stop, that, Felix—I want to know where you came from, too—"

"Well," and the gardener took up his shears and began clipping the ivy that hung over her head. As a long branch fell into her lap, he said: "Let that signify that I have dropped—figuratively speaking—into your arms—and that is enough. It is not every day a common gardener wins so sweet a lady-love. But, Lady Marsden will be sending out soon for roses for the table and I must not keep you out here asking questions when you should have been kissing me instead. Here, I'll let you in—" and Felix, the gardener of old Hall Born, opened the narrow gate with his shining key and lifted Lady Mary in his strong arms, set her over the stone sill and closed the gate after her. Then he clipped busily at the straggling ivy, lifted some tendrils and planted them against the roots of an old oak that had stood, gnarled and black, near the wall for many generations of Marsdens. In an incredibly short time he was clipping the stately stems with the nodding roses and laying them carefully side by side in the long rose basket on the walk before him.

Then Lady Mary went carelessly by the rose garden nor deigned to glance his way, nor was he bold enough to lift the blue veined lids that hung over his humble eyes.

At dinner Lady Marsden said, as she took up a letter which had come by the last post and turned it over, carefully inspecting the wax on the flap:

"It is strange those Americans who boast of being Republicans should cling to the customs of their possible forebears. There is something wonderfully familiar, Mary, in the impression in this wax. I wish you would observe it, your eyes are better than mine. I dare say they have bought it from some dealer in such things and have stumbled by chance on the arms of the other branch of the house. But, no matter, for this party wants to go over Hall Born, and has written if it is for lease she will take it for the season—with the shooting—and—"

"But you are not intending to let it now that it is—" Lady Mary

colored and dropped her eyes at her plate, for she was not thinking of the place at all, it was the gardener that filled her mind.

"Certainly I will if they pay well—so if you will answer this that it may go out on the evening post I will appoint tomorrow when they may go over the manor. The sooner done the better." Then Lady Marsden turned off her cup of stout and left the table to the ancient butler, who gathered the silver and carefully counted it before he put it in its baskets and then slipped them into their safe, muttering as he worked over "the necessity of being doubly doubtful since that rascally new gardener had come from none knew where" and had been put in care of the greenhouses just because he had looked over the wall six months before and offered to put strength and health into the ancient roses or ask no wages at all, at all, and with Lady Marsden a pound was a pound, and considering that he slept in the gardener's house and supplied his own keep, and had never once been inside the Hall, she deemed it not a half bad bargain,—and surely the old rose garden was prolific, and the roses looked up and smiled into the skies of England as roses in that garden had never done before.

But for all that the butler had his doubts and took care of the silver that had been brought to the old Hall with the father of the present Lady Marsden, for when the last Marsdens of Hall Born had disappeared so also had vanished the ancient silver of generations of that Marsden line.

On the day following, when Lady Mary passed the rose garden, the stems bent and the roses bowed; when she reached the narrow gate it opened, she was gathered into the same strong arms and her lips covered with kisses.

"Felix, Felix, don't! Some horrid, nasty Americans who sport a crest and write strange English want to lease Hall Born for the season—" and she paused for want of breath, as well from words as from the surplus of caresses that were constantly smothering her. She did not look in her Felix's face, but went on as she gazed at the bridge crossing the ravine,—“and the strangest part of it all is, the name is Marsden.”

Then the gardener was suddenly transformed from the lover to the man of humble sphere. Letting his arms fall from the slender waist of Lady Mary he seized the shears that lay on the grass and fell to clipping the long straggling ivy. He transplanted two branches against the roots of two other oaks that showed traces of the storms of many generations, and as he patted the earth about them he murmured his own and Lady Mary's name; then he clipped and trimmed, and as he worked Lady Mary directed and talked—the severest critic could not have told of the love that lay between them.

When on the next day Mrs. Marsden, of America, went through Hall Born, falling into ecstasies over the ancient tapestries and carvings and walking along the gallery that held the pictures of the Hall Borners for many generations, she saw the face of one that was passing familiar. Though it wore the small clothes of three generations back, the face and the eyes and the hair were the same to her. Then, to conceal her desire and her discovery, she asked:

"Is the Hall for sale?"

"No," replied Lady Marsden's steward, "the manor is not for sale—it can never be sold—for it is entailed—"

"Entailed, eh? And what is that?" The voice of the American Mrs. Marsden was strangely insistent.

"Simply entailed—must descend to him whose direct—ancestors were owners—and it can not be sold—," and he led her out over the terrace and through the famous rose garden.

"And are those people who now live here—the rightful heirs?"

"No, they are not in the direct line, and can not inherit, but can occupy and use the income—the rentals—in part—" but he was interrupted by Mrs. Marsden, who was going off into a perfect rhapsody over the rose garden and wanted a flower to wear on her bosom. But, nowhere could the gardener be found to clip one for her, so in true American freedom, and considering several things she had in mind—that of soon being lessee of the property—she cried:

"Oh, it does not matter, Mr. Steward, I'll just break it off," and then and there she proceeded to tear from their long stems three of the finest blooms in the garden, the very ones, in fact, that had nodded their glorious heads to Lady Mary as she sped by them toward the narrow gate in the stone wall. And as the American Mrs. Marsden carried her curiosity with her she forced the steward to give her lead and he followed in awesome dread of her volume of questions.

"Now this gate? Where does it lead, Mr. Steward?" and she pushed against the weatherbeaten panels of the narrow gate on whose other side sat Lady Mary and Felix.

"To the ravine, madame, but—"

"We'll have it opened—will you see that that sheath of ivy is removed? For when I come here I shall want to pass through it instead of going all the way round Robin Hood's Barn to get into the grove beyond—"

"Robin Hood's Barn is not hereabouts, madame," muttered the slow-going steward, but Mrs. Marsden went on:

"Such a lovely place for picnics, I know. I reckon there's a good substantial bridge across the—creek."

"The bridge is there, to be sure," and they passed on.

Felix, the gardener, heard the voice of Mrs. Marsden, the soon-to-be-tenant, and smothered the mouth of Lady Mary into silence with kisses as the order was given to have the gate cleared of ivy and opened. When the voices passed on he said:

"It is time to leave here, Lady Mary. When the new season's tenant comes in I must get away. Will you go with me? The *Cedric* sails in three days for New York. In America we can find a home. I have a place in my mind of a very wealthy mine owner where—with a reference from Lady Marsden—I am sure I can secure a situation in his greenhouses. He pays magnificently—and in a short time I can have some greenhouses of my own—will you go with me,—Mary?"

"But, they will want you to keep the roses—" Lady Mary's voice trembled.

"I will not remain. You know I have not worked for wages, here, and can go as I came—if Lady Marsden will give me no 'character' I can go without. But where will she go when they come in?"

"To the town house." It seemed to Lady Mary that Felix was not eager for answer to his first question as he hurried along on other questions so fast.

"Does it, too, belong to the domain?"

"Oh, yes, everything belongs to that lost heir—nothing but the keep, until after a certain time; if he does appear it reverts to the crown."

"And when does that certain time expire?"

"Somewhere in the next century—not in my time. But, I have money of my own—and I will go with you—Felix—for I love you more than title or family. I will be plain Mrs. Felix, if you want me."

"Of course you are going. I never thought of anything else. I only asked you for politeness sake, or the mere form of it," but he stopped speaking to smother her remonstrance with his lips on her own, and then he lifted her in his arms and tenderly held her for a moment against his heart. "Bless you Lady Mary, for yourself is the gift I most prize on earth or in heaven above the earth. In America I will carve a name and fortune for you. It is a big place and fortunes lie thick for the man who gathers them. Meet me to-morrow morning here and we will pass through the old grove and into the way that will carry us oceanward." Then she was lifted for the last time and placed over the sill of the narrow gate and the lock slipped into its place behind her.

At dinner that evening Lady Marsden said:

"The Hall is taken at a fair price for the season. We will go at once to town and—"

"I should prefer to go elsewhere, and come later—to town." Lady Mary's voice was soft and gentle and her eyes dropped as she looked at the quietly grave face of her mother.

"As you wish. When will you leave?"

"At five in the morning. My boxes are packed and I will send them to the station to-night."

"What a beastly hour. You may kiss me good-bye when you retire, for I shall not rise till eight." Lady Marsden sighed as she looked with cool gray eyes at the flushed face of her daughter. Why she should flush at the mention of kissing her good-night did not disturb the stately and dignified Lady Marsden.

"The new gardener sent you this note, my Lady," said the butler as he gingerly laid the note, tray and all, by the side of Lady Marsden's plate. The idea of a servant writing a note to the Lady of Hall Born was an unheard-of piece of effrontery, and the ancient butler, whose father's father had been butler when the young Lord and heir had disappeared and all the family silver and gems had as mysteriously vanished, was ready to call him down.

Lady Marsden opened the note, and said, indifferently:

"Oh, he wants reference—he understands that the place is let—and well—how did he find that out since none of the servants associate with him, and he has never been inside the Hall—"

"You forget the steward, mother,—and you had better give him the reference." Lady Mary's cheeks burned at the thought of her position, but she rose and brought a sheet of crested paper, placing it with a letter-pad and pen before her mother. Then she ordered the butler to bring ink and to wait for the credential and to carry it to the gardener, whom she saw standing on the terrace watching the movements in the dining-room. Lady Mary also brought a thick envelope, on whose flap was the coat of arms of the house of Marsden.

"Oh, well, what is the name? Felix? Felix is all he signs himself—quite respectful I must say—" and Lady Marsden wrote a wordy, stiff recommendation and signed her name, then gave it to Lady Mary to blot and place in the envelope and return to her that she might inscribe the "To Whom It May Concern" on the back, and as she sat with her pen poised and waiting she glanced through the window and beheld the strong form of the gardener standing on the terrace. The masterful physique outlined against the light startled her. Even after she had scrawled in the angular English fashion the inscription on the envelope she let her eyes return again to watch the man on the terrace. She saw the under butler give him the reference and beheld with what indifference he placed it, unopened, in his workman's pocket. She had told the butler to direct him to

return in an hour and she would pay him for his six months' service. She watched the two men as they gave and received the messages.

Then it was that Lady Mary was startled to a full realization of what her future position would be—the wife of a man who toiled for wages. But she watched the butler's return with eager expectation.

"Your ladyship, the under butler says as the new gardener does not desire any wages—'give it to the poor'—he says—and that he feels amply repaid for all he has done—in seeing the roses come to what they have—" but the butler was out of breath and he suddenly ceased speaking for the thought came that, when a man refuses wages for labor well done, it was time to exercise double care of the silver.

"Some rose-mad fool, I dare say," remarked Lady Marsden as she watched the butler remove the cloth to bring in the after-dinner coffee for her and Lady Mary.

But Lady Mary's face was glorious with joy at the thought that whatever wage her future husband might earn he would take none from her own mother.

The long stems bowed and the roses nodded to Lady Mary in the soft gray of the early morning when she ran through the rose garden to the narrow gate in the ivy wall. As she sprang through it closed behind her and the little shining key was slipped into the owner's pocket and his strong arms gathered his lady-love to release her no more. Across the little bridge they sped and through the deer run in the forest until they gained the road they sought, but now and then Lady Mary was caught up in the strong arms, her lips were kissed and she was set on her feet again to speed over the dry, white road to the station where the train would meet them. And they were just in time.

The journey over land and sea was long, nor did Felix shorten it by taking short routes for, though he told it not to his bride, there was much in store from which he could draw to travel whithersoever he might wish. ..

At last they sped over the white plains of the great Western world and Lady Mary watched the ever-shifting scenery as it flew up to meet her eyes but to dart along and drop behind. The train rushed on through mountains, over mesas, across bridges and brought to view the most vivid panorama of brilliant lights and shades she had ever seen.

"What a glorious world, Felix," she said at almost every new phase of the Western world that leaped into view and lost itself in the passage of the train.

"It is God's own, Lady Mary," responded Felix as he watched her.

When the journey was ended and Felix lifted his wife and set her feet on the newly-made platform of a small way station he said:

"Cast your eyes about you, Lady Mary, and tell me what you think."

"Surely, Felix, it must be where Paradise begins," she breathed as she let her eyes go out over the scenes before and around her.

"It is, Lady Mary, my Mary," returned Felix as he wound her hand in his and together they started over what to her appeared only a few rods, but which were in fact, a few miles ever on the ascending scale, and when, at last, they gained their goal at the height of a beautiful hill on which stood a house that in England would have been called a castle, they paused to look about them. Then Felix left the side of his wife for a moment and went forward to meet a rough-looking fellow who stood on the terrace of the great house.

Together they spoke in low tones and then Lady Mary saw Felix draw from his pocket the white envelope of Lady Marsden's reference and give it to the fellow in buckskins, who opened it and glanced over it, then laughing in a clear and rather boisterous manner he returned it to Felix, and turned and went toward the wide open door beyond the terrace. The face of Felix was filled with smiles as he came back to his wife.

"It is all right, Lady Mary. The man has the vacancy. I felt sure of this place, and I am glad I made it, for you must be growing weary of the long journey."

"Is he the wealthy mine owner, Felix?" she asked, making no answer to the remark of her being tired of jaunting. She could well believe the man was a miner, but she had her doubts as to the fact of his wealth.

"No, sweet Lady, he is only the manager, or rather the man left in charge—the owner is travelling in Europe—or at least was the last letter the man had from him,—we will assume he is there now. The manager says in lieu of a better place for you he will take the responsibility of giving you rooms in the castle—yes, that is what it is called out here—and there is a room at the greenhouse that I will occupy, it is designed for the gardener, and he will have my meals sent out from the castle kitchen and when he hears from the—the owner he thinks there will be orders for a suitable abode made for you—he—"

"I will not have it so, Felix. Whither you go there will I go, and wheresoever you abide there will I also be found. We will go at once to the gardener's room—"

"I would kiss you this minute if it were not for that galoot of a

man watching us—Look! whatever does he want? Wait a second and I will see,” and Felix rushed up the broad terrace steps of the American castle and held a whispered consultation with the man in buckskins. Then he leaped down the steps and with a happy face said to his wife: “He has just recalled that the room is unfurnished—the gardener either took his furniture away with him or lived with his family further out on the ranch—so he will take some from the house and we will go there and superintend the arrangement of it. Then next week I will buy some of our own.”

Then the gardener and his lady wife followed the man in buckskins as he strode around the castle and reached the greenhouses that stood on the sunny side of a yet higher hill.

The gardener's room was big as a barn and Lady Mary suggested partitions and curtains until the suite of rooms it made, with large windows giving out over mountains and vales, were the handsomest she had ever seen, and so she declared to the unspeakable joy of her Felix.

“You must not draw too much upon your money, Felix, for I have some, you know,” she timidly said one day when he had paid a large sum for several Navajo blankets to grace her doors and walls, and for answer she had her mouth covered with kisses. No matter what he did she was by him and never was he too busy or too absorbed to drop everything and take her in his arms and caress her,—he never seemed to think she had given up much in surrendering title, home and country for a nameless gardener.

“The money is all right, Lady Mary,” he replied, as he arose, took up the hose and went on spraying the plants. “These are fine greenhouses—most as fine—”

“Now, Felix, you need not take me for a bigoted, narrow-minded person. These greenhouses are finer than anything I ever saw in all England, and I do not hesitate in saying it.”

Time ran along into months and the gardener and his lady wife were happy until one morning the man who always strode about in buckskins came to them with a letter saying the owner was sending a French florist to take care of the greenhouses and introduce some new ideas. Then when the man's back was turned Lady Mary reached up and patted Felix's shoulder lovingly.

“Always remember I have some money, and since things may be had here, in God's country, for the asking, why may we not have a ranch, and in time build our castle?”

“That is true, Lady Mary. We will preempt at once.”

Then the two began their journeys up and down mountains, in

and out vales, until it was enough to tire the most patient woman and fatigue a much stronger woman than was Lady Mary; yet she was ever radiant with smiles and her heart was filled with love for Felix. Finally a ranch was found to suit them and it was made out in Lady Mary Marsden's name—at which fact she openly rebelled, but Felix stopped her mouth in the usual way and they settled down and built themselves a home to suit the whims and fancies of Lady Mary for it was her own place. And through it all she was sunny and happy until one morning the lord of her heart came to her and said:

"I fear I am a wanderer on the face of the earth for my gypsy blood is rising in me. I will take Lady Marsden's recommendation and we will make our way back through the Eastern world and see the heathen folks as they live in their own country. I can ply my art now and then and make our expenses. Your money is safely invested and if you would prefer to remain on the ranch—I can go alone—I am as one possessed and must go."

Then the smile came into her eyes as she watched him. And she spoke as he well knew she would.

"Whither thou goest there will I go and wheresoever you abide there will you find me also," and she arose and packed her boxes, and his own as well, and he placed a manager on the ranch as she directed.

As months came and went counting into years Lady Mary and her Felix journeyed among different worlds and saw life under many new stars. And then, at last, one morning when the sun rose over the old deer run in the woods of the domain of old Hall Born, Felix and Lady Mary crossed the bridge of the ravine and he took the shining key from his vest and opened the narrow gate in the stone wall and they went up through the rose garden that was wonderful to behold, for the roses were as luxurious and glorious as when Felix had laid aside the shears and stolen the sweetest rose from the old Hall.

"Stop, Felix! Let me kiss you in their smiles, for I fear my mother will never forgive me!" And for the first time in the years of her journeys tears came into the depths of her eyes.

"Keep up a stout heart, Lady Mary, for I am ever with you. See how the roses bend and bow to you as of old!" Then he led her around by the terrace and carried her to the great door, and there leaving her he sprang up the steps and rang the bell with a masterful hand; and when the under butler threw open the doors Felix sprang inside and as Lady Mary's faltering feet stood on the sill he bowed with a smile to her and cried:

"Welcome back to your own, My Lady! Welcome to your own domain, Lady Mary Marsden, for the man who has worn your angelic

patience to fiddle strings is the lost heir to old Hall Born. He came hither six years past, to find the gate and fit the shining key, then to unearth the door concealed in the old rose garden that led to the vault under the Hall where his great-grandfather hid the things of value that belonged to his estate when he left England, sick of the vanity and pomp of life, and sought a new life and a new world in the West of America, and there built unto himself a family and began that old castle in the mountains where you lived as the gardener's wife so many happy and contented months. When he died he left the little key to his son to be given to the first son of the family who should be named Felix, and as generations passed none gave the name until my mother recalled the history of the man who founded the family of Marsdens in the mountains and so she, unwittingly, from a spirit of romance, made me entitled to the key and all it opened.

"But she little dreamed that I would gather to me the sweetest rose that ever grew under the skies of England, my Mary, my Lady Mary," and he gathered her in his arms and covered her face with kisses. But when he set her again on her feet she looked and beheld her own mother and also the American woman who came to the manor on the morning of her elopement with Felix, the gardener.

The welcome was not what she had expected, for she was taken into the arms of first one woman and then the other and made to feel that it was sweet to have one mother but sweeter by far to have two, for the American Mrs. Marsden was the mother of Felix who had tired of waiting for the return of her son when he had absented himself and gave no reasons for his stopping in the little town to which she addressed her letters. So she journeyed after him, and was pleased to take a country house for the season hoping to find him and induce him to come out of seclusion. But her innocent arrival at Hall Born put him to further flight: yet he left a letter behind that explained to the satisfaction of both herself and Lady Marsden that it was well to leave the gardener and his wife to come home at their own election.

The old butler found faith in the new gardener for he brought out the ancient silver and polished it to its pristine brightness and had only one regret, which was that his grandfather was not there to know that the silver was safe.

